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**THE FAULTS OF THE GENERALS: HOW GREAT
BRITAIN LOST THE WAR FOR AMERICA**

by

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December 2011

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FOR AMERICA**

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ABSTRACT

By 1778, the world's most powerful Empire had failed, for almost four years, to decisively end an internal rebellion in its North American colonies. This failure resulted in the escalation to a world war and the British submitting to defeat in 1783. What is of interest is not the international community's impact on the outcome of the American Revolution, rather how the British military continually missed the opportunity to end the rebellion in its nascent phase. Therefore, this research will explore the strategic interaction between the British military, the patriots and the American colonists to determine what British military commanders' decisions contributed to these missed opportunities, and the ultimate loss of their War for America. To illuminate what went wrong, this research will import the McCormick Diamond paradigm to sift through this field of history, framing the strategic decisions, the conditions under which they were made and their effects on the overall British effort to quell the colonial rebels of North America.

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I. INTRODUCTION

“Never let any Government imagine that it can choose perfectly safe courses; rather let it expect to have to take very doubtful ones, because it is found in ordinary affairs that one never seeks to avoid one trouble without running into another; but prudence consists in knowing how to distinguish the character of troubles, and for choice to take the lesser evil.”

–Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*¹

A. SCOPE

One of the longest and most economically and socially taxing forms of war is the insurgency. History proves that small groups can mobilize support from the masses to challenge an incumbent government. These small groups establish new governments by violently ousting the incumbent, and bankrupting strong governments by engaging in multi-year conflicts. The beginning of the United States of America is no exception.

The 1783 Treaty of Paris formally secured the end of the American Revolution, but not before Britain lost thousands of lives and a considerable amount of national treasure. The 19 April 1775 British mission to the town of Concord, an eventual catastrophic British failure, initiated the American Revolution. Yet, the incumbent British military commander in North America, as early 1774, was warning members of the British Parliament that discontent within the colonies would lead to violence. Ironically, not only did General Gage prophesize colonial violence, but he ordered the Concord mission serving to inflame the masses to support a revolutionary response. The second major British effort occurred in June 1775, with Gage ordering more than 3,000 troops to seize Breed’s Hill. Despite mission accomplishment, the British were unable to exploit their success due to sustaining heavy casualties. These types of British efforts continued for eight years, with victories and losses, which ultimately resulted in the defeat of the British military, and the creation of the United States of America.

¹ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. W.K. Marriot (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1908), 111.

B. RESEARCH QUESTION

How did the British military, the largest and most technologically advanced of its time, fail to prevent the growth of the colonial rebellion from 1774–1778? Important to note is the period covered during this research. Arguably, the rebels’ most vulnerable time is these five years due to an incoherent organization and lack of resources.² As to why Britain failed during these years, most students would cite the lack of a coherent British national strategy resulting from a factionalized, indifferent, or even sympathetic British Parliament, as well as incompetent British military commanders.

C. PURPOSE

Renowned colonial era Historian John Shy warns against holding the British military commanders at fault, citing that they were competent and that their “few mistakes...are the kind of lapses that inevitably occur in every war.”³ Shy further asserts that these mistakes, either inevitable or calculated on misunderstandings, are part of a greater, more complex environment, and thus he argues that over-focus on the military commanders’ role in the conflict is futile.

However, would the American Revolution have started on April 19, 1775, had General Gage cancelled the operation? Would it have ever started if no military operations took place? Would the conflict have lasted eight more years if Bunker Hill had been a total British victory (as opposed to pyrrhic) against the newly organized colonial army? These are interesting questions. Mistakes most certainly do occur in war, but which ones inflame the situation and which ones do not? Of course, tying the fate of nations on a singular decision is oversimplification. However, there is something unique about the synergistic effects of multiple decisions and their subsequent effects. Specifically, how those decisions cumulatively achieve or fail to achieve a national level goal.

² This year was chosen because of the overt entry of the French army and navy in the actual fighting.

³ John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 18.

With this in mind, and not focusing on the missed opportunities to deal with the disparate rebels prior to 1774, this research asks what could those military commanders have done to control the rebels and prevent a worldwide conflagration, ultimately leading to more lost blood and treasure for the British Empire. More specifically, how did the British military contribute to the loss of the War for America between the years of 1774 and 1778? The criticality of these initial moments and the decisions that shape them goes without saying.

Rather than exploring the nascent phases of the American Revolution at an abstract level to answer this question, this research will take the perspective of the British military commanders. Because this case is rich with theoretical explanations, Pulitzer-prize winning historiographies and years of scholarly work, the information at our disposal is limitless and can be drawn upon to ensure all circumstances and information surrounding the British military commanders is present, and thus fully form a complete picture of the commanders failures. Furthermore, the intent of this research is to bridge the gap between academia and practice using a highly functional theory. This theory provides useful information for military practitioners involved in similar conditions, highlights useable models to academics, and helps scope future social sciences theory development.⁴ Therefore, we will attempt to demonstrate a clear and detailed description of the type of knowledge military practitioners desire.⁵

D. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To begin, we cite that a counterinsurgency as defined by Joint Publication 1-02 is a “[c]omprehensive civilian and military effort [sic] taken to defeat an insurgency and to address any core grievances.”⁶ The same document cites that an insurgency is “[t]he organized use of subversion and violence by a group or movement that seeks to

⁴ Michael W. Mosser, “Puzzles versus Problems: The Alleged Disconnect Between Academics and Military Practitioners,” *Reflections* 8, no. 4 (December 2010), 1.

⁵ Alexander L. George, *Bridging the Gap: Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 1993), 16.

⁶ Department of Defense, “Joint Publication 1-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms” *DTIC Online*, November 8, 2010, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf (accessed December 1, 2010), 85.

overthrow or force change of a governing authority.”⁷ We determined the conditions within the American Revolution—or the American *insurgency*—are consistent within the definitions above. Therefore, we move forward to determine the optimal *counterinsurgency* theory given that our research question addresses how the British—the counterinsurgent entity—failed to reduce the colonial rebellion—the insurgent entity.

A cursory search utilizing any search engine available will provide the researcher with multiple theories on insurgent warfare. Similarly, the expansion of counterinsurgent theory literature in the 1960s led academics to determine that simple reverse engineering of major schools of revolutionary thought such as Mao Zedong, Che Guevara, Carlos Marighella and Karl Marx were no longer viable. Table 1 identifies the major contributors to counterinsurgency theory. The right hand side of the table cites this research team’s interpretation of each author’s major contribution.

⁷ Department of Defense, “Joint Publication 1–02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms,” 178.

<u>Author</u>	<u>Distinguishing Contributions and Strengths</u>
Galula ⁸	Struggle over “hearts and minds,” where inherent strengths of each entity require diplomatic, economic and military actions to clear, hold, and re-establish government.
Krepenevich ⁹	Build organization with strategy in mind, because strategy matters.
Lomperis ¹⁰	Struggle for legitimacy while focusing on preventing a successful insurgency.
Cann ¹¹	Doctrinal flexibility and organization matter.
Taber ¹²	Obtain awareness of population disparity then reverse engineer successful insurgency and attack insurgent weaknesses.
Nagl ¹³	Institutional learning must be flexible, and adaptive in order to achieve indirect and direct strategy victories.
Kilcullen ¹⁴	Cultural awareness matters, and must apply relevant strategy to incorporate military and civil entities with goal of establishing security.
Thompson ¹⁵	Government must have a clear political aim, function in accordance with the law, have an overall plan, and prioritize defeating political subversion.
Hart ¹⁶	The indirect approach is the preferred method for waging war because it stresses movement, flexibility, surprise that disrupts the enemy's psychological and physical balance.

Table 1. COIN Theory Contributions

⁸ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 1964).

⁹ Andrew F. Krepenevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1988).

¹⁰ Timothy J. Lomperis, *From People's War to People's Rule: Insurgency, Intervention and the Lessons of Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

¹¹ John P. Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa: The Portuguese Way of War 1961–1974* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997).

¹² Robert Taber, *War of the Flea: Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare* (Washington: Brassey's Incorporated, 2002).

¹³ John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2002).

¹⁴ David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla* (London: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁵ Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Praeger, 1966).

¹⁶ B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy: The Indirect Approach* (New York: Praeger, 1954).

Our intent was not to oversimplify relevant counterinsurgency theories, but to assert the individual strengths of each theory. All the contributions listed above are vital and therefore we searched for a theory that posited the aforementioned strengths finding them present in a highly pragmatic theory contextualized in a very useable heuristic; the diamond, created by Gordon McCormick. McCormick's model facilitates analyzing and understanding a multi-variant problem in a very simplistic way.¹⁷

At the very heart of McCormick's theory, is the desire to exercise government control over the geographical space in question. Conflict arises when the values of society do not match those of the government. This disparity polarizes the citizens into two general political entities called the state and the counter-state who then vie for political control. Most specifically, the important variables associated with McCormick's paradigm are disparity, structure and strategy. The following discussion unpacks the contents of each variable.

Disparity plays the central role in creating a polarized population, from which the counter-state emerges. The Historian Chalmers Johnson asserts, "so long as a society's values and the realities with which it must deal are in harmony with each other, the society is immune from revolution."¹⁸ Conversely, he writes, "the cause of disequilibrium is the failure of homeostatic mechanisms—that is to say, the pressure has been so sudden, intense, or unprecedented that it has incapacitated the routine institutional procedures and arrangements of a system for self-maintenance."¹⁹ Johnson further states that the re-synchronization process occurs when a society's leaders perceive the disequilibrium and act to adjust the reality back to societal values, and that failure to perceive or act accordingly, by leaders, can result in the creation of a revolutionary

¹⁷ Gordon McCormick's theory of insurgency, discussed in his lectures, is best described in Eric P. Wendt, "Strategic Counterinsurgency Modeling," *Special Warfare*, September 2005: 2–13. The following discussion captures the major contributions of the theory and lays the groundwork for this research team's analytical efforts.

¹⁸ Chalmers A. Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1982), 62.

¹⁹ Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*, 73.

organization.²⁰ The final causes of revolution, according to Johnson, are events that accelerate or “lead [sic] a group of revolutionaries to *believe* that the time to strike is now.”²¹

As such, the insurgents—the counter-state—strike to replace the existing authority, and the counterinsurgents—the state—strike back in order to retain authority. Both have an inherent initial advantage. The state’s advantage is force; more specifically lots of people, guns and money. The counter-state’s advantage is information; more specifically they are able to maintain secrecy or hide from the state due to their relative small size. To win, either side must incrementally increase their control over the geographical space, or retain said control. To do so, both sides must mobilize support from the population and/or the international community to augment their inherent initial weaknesses, which also happens to be their opponent’s advantage. To mobilize, both actors must have a structure that employs inputs into valuable growth outputs. Therefore, successful counterinsurgency programs should reduce the outputs of the insurgent *structure* to the point that the insurgent movement itself is no longer capable of growing, and must abandon the conflict.

Simply creating and maintaining a successful structure is only half the solution. Correctly directing the outputs of the actor’s structures will prescribe success. Understanding that the state has a force advantage, the insurgent intuitively understands that direct action is unlikely to be successful (Identified as #3 in Figure 1). Conversely, the state’s probability of locating the insurgent is very small due to their information advantage (Identified as #3 in Figure 1). This reality forces the state and counter-state into a struggle over support from the population and the international community (Identified as #1 and #5 in Figure 1). Once either entity achieves greater size, they may progressively target the structure (Identified as #2 and #4 in Figure 1), and ultimately the actors themselves (Identified as #3 in Figure 1), with better probability. Therefore, successful counterinsurgency programs should employ the correct *strategy* to maximize probabilities of success and increase control of the geographical space.

²⁰ Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*, Chapter 5: “Revolution.”

²¹ Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*, 94.

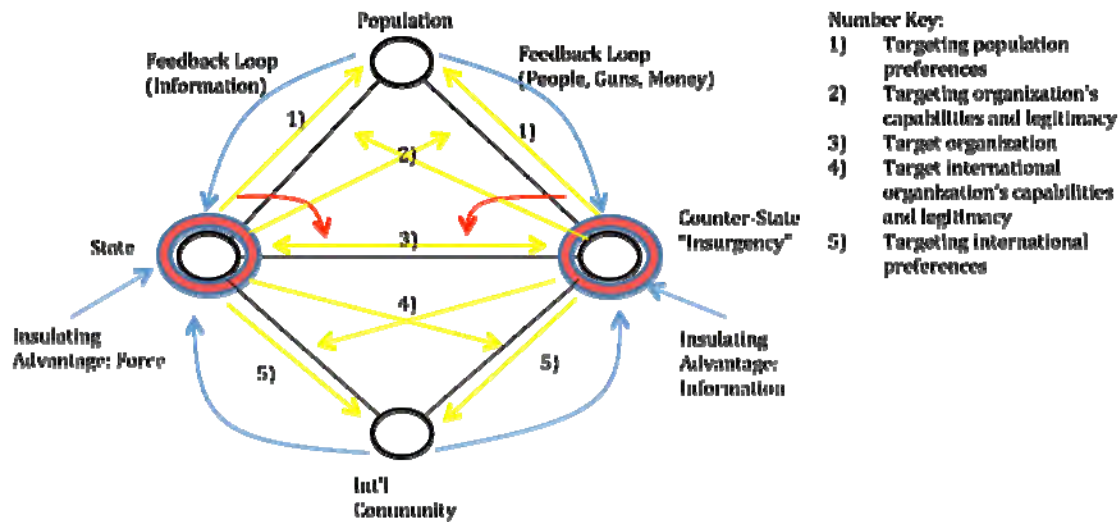


Figure 1. McCormick's Diamond Model.²²

Optimal structure and optimal strategy are the prescriptions for control over the population, which aggregately increases probabilities of success for either the insurgent or counterinsurgent. The definition of success is the displacement of the actor's opponent, and the amount of the success depends on the level of control exercised on the geographical inhabitants in the end. Control whether exercised through legitimacy or coercion is recognized either as *de facto* or *de jure* by the population in a given geographical space. As discussed, insurgencies must *mobilize* people, armaments, and money in order to force the state out, whereas the state must *locate* the insurgent then eliminate him.

Intuitively, from the counterinsurgent's perspective, and with the aforementioned understanding, the initial phases of an insurgency serve as the most dangerous to insurgents.²³ This nascent phase begins for the counterinsurgent when the incumbent becomes aware of the insurgency, and subsequently acts to counter the insurgency's

²² The Figure is the thesis team's visual interpretation of McCormick's paradigm and can be found in various other forms or fashions.

²³ Gordon H. McCormick and Frank Giordano, "Things Come Together: Symbolic Violence and Guerrilla Mobilization," *Third World Quarterly*, 2007, 285.

efforts. Furthermore, the nascent phase ends for the counterinsurgent when the insurgency is reduced, or when the insurgency has achieved an effective base of support.²⁴

Thus, the decisions and actions by all actors, and the interplay of their effects, can inflame the population against the counterinsurgent's efforts, or complement their efforts. Moreover, this nascent phase is generally the time that military units are tasked with reducing an insurgency, as was General Gage in 1774. This research moves forward to analyze the decisions made by military commanders during the nascent phase.

Because the essence of this research is “on explaining a historical[ly] important case...[and] exemplify a theory for pedagogical purposes,” we will employ the disciplined configurative case study.²⁵ Using McCormick's Diamond paradigm to organize and analyze such a complex situation as the American Insurgency will help discern the decisions that exacerbated problems, versus those decisions that were not culpable. Additionally, this research argues not that other hypotheses and theories are invalid or weak, but rather that we assume risk in the event that convergent colligation does exist—or as we have discussed that it will exist. In fact, many other time-tested theories have been thrown at parts of the American Revolution and had their opportunity to tout their assertions. It is with this in mind that this research team beseeches the readers to consider McCormick's paradigm and give it a chance to discover the faults of the British Generals.

E. ROADMAP

To achieve this end, Chapter II will provide a historical narrative of the conditions on the eve of the American Insurgency. Surveys of prominent works citing how disparity between the British government and the American colonies created the counter-state will be the focus of this chapter. Chapter III will detail the history of General Gage's attempt to subdue the rebellion and Chapter IV will detail the attempts of General Howe. Both

²⁴ McCormick and Giordano, “Things Come Together,” *Third World Quarterly*, 300.

²⁵ Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 75.

Chapter III and IV are based on facts alone, organized temporally and centered on the major events that represent the clash between the British military and rebel's various structures and strategies. Chapter V analyzes the strategies of the Generals. As such, this research finds that the Generals faults consisting of underestimation, and mismanagement of perceptions, the force, risk, and expectations exacerbated the conflict towards irresolution, and the loss of Britain's War for America.

II. POLARIZING EFFECTS OF DISPARITY

“The liberties of a people never were, nor ever will be, secure, when the transactions of their rulers may be concealed from them.”

—Patrick Henry, *Speech to the Virginia Convention*²⁶

A. INTRODUCTION

The rise of political and economic disequilibrium between Britain and its colonies began to take root in the middle of the 18th century. For the sake of clarity, the year 1754 witnessed miniscule decay in the harmony between Britain and the colonies that began with the rejection of the recommendations put forth by the Albany Congress. The result was homeostatic mechanisms prevailed. Although relations weakened, harmony was re-established and the events of the next eight years—what is now termed the Citadel Weakened Wave—facilitated the intermingling of people, organizations and ideas. Not until the Proclamation Act of 1763 was harmony adversely affected. Then, the sudden and unprecedented legislation by Britain, from 1763 until 1765 to regain control and conduct Empire cleaning, shocked the colonists. The disharmony during this time—what is now termed the Catalysts Towards Conflict Wave—culminates on the eve of October 1765. The Stamp Act of 1765 marks the end of wave two, and simultaneously gives rise to the final wave, which is characterized by the colonies leveraging the legal, and sometimes illegal, imperial mechanisms to articulate their dissatisfaction. This Wave of Failed Strategies ends on 19 April 1775, when the rebels take to coordinated and violent extra-legal means to break from the state.

As this chapter presents and examines the three waves, the role of disparity will become the principle recurrent theme. More specifically, how disparity led to and affected the origins and organization of the different actors involved. Interwoven with disparity are the effects of failed strategies and how such failures added to the differences between groups, and set the emergence of the counter-state on a trajectory to violent

²⁶ William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry: Life, Correspondence and Speeches* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), 496.

confrontation. The latter portion of this chapter will conclude with a snapshot of the population's preferences and values—something the military commanders would have surely known.

B. CITADEL WEAKENED

At the outset of the 1750s, the interaction between the colonies and the British government was generally favorable. Trade occurred unhindered, taxes were paid and collected, and the execution of day-to-day colonial activities ensued without any major upheavals. However, two major events during the British Supremacy Wave assisted with laying the framework for colonial disparity and subsequent organization. These events were the Albany Congress of 1754 and the Seven Years' War (French and Indian War—Fourth Inter-colonial War).

The most important event of the first wave is the Seven Years' War. Its effect on both the British and the colonists is significant in many regards. Specifically, the war created an economic crisis for Britain and increased the misunderstandings concerning imperialism and partnership. Even more, the long-term military miscalculations arising from an overly myopic analysis of interactions during the war between military leaders led to unintended and unobserved political mobilization.

After almost a century of global warfare, Britain's fiscal strength had ebbed, and the country was in a budgetary crisis. Additional revenue was needed to balance the budget, which caused Parliament "to tighten its control over the provinces, commencing a more strenuous enforcement of its nearly century-old trade laws and increasing its influence over the imperial administrative machinery and colonial currency."²⁷ The ramifications of increased economic scrutiny will receive greater attention during the second wave due to such events as the Sugar Act, the Stamp Act and other pieces of legislation passed by Parliament, but all economic legislation hereto forward was the result of the massive run-up of bills during the Seven Years' War.

²⁷ John Ferling, *Almost A Miracle: The American Victory in the War of Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 22.

The economic burden of sustaining the Seven Years' War was high, but so was the pride of the colonists. The colonists believed themselves to have carried the larger burden in the victory over the French and Indians, and because of that they now had, "expectations of imperial partnership."²⁸ The foundational ideas of "partnership" were evident in the way that the British Parliament engaged in an unprecedented *cooperative* effort with colonial legislation throughout the war.²⁹ Conversely, the British postwar perspective of the colonies consisted chiefly of reorienting the Empire by returning the colonial legislatures to their subordinate position under Parliament. The confluence of these perspectives was not attainable and only fueled each side's level of disparity.

The British perception—one of low regard for the military capabilities of the colonists - was prevalent and opined by most British observers. Historian John Shy cites Major General James Wolfe, a British officer, as saying the American militias were "the dirtiest most contemptible cowardly dogs that you can conceive. There is no depending on them in action. They fall down dead in their own dirt and desert by battalions, officers and all."³⁰ These preconceived notions about the militias would continue for many years and factor into the British war strategy beginning in 1775.

The British were not the only ones who thought that the colonial military performance was wanting; the colonial military leaders thought the same. However, unlike the British, the colonial leaders learned valuable lessons. As Historian Don Higginbotham cites, the Seven Years' War was a dress rehearsal for the leaders of American Revolution. Experiences with lackluster recruitment, undisciplined soldiers, supply shortages and inter-colonial cooperation issues plagued the leaders in the former war, but were dealt with more ease in the latter war.³¹

²⁸ Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of the British in North America, 1754–1766* (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 587.

²⁹ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 482.

³⁰ John W. Shy, *Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 416.

³¹ Don Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence* (Holliston: Northeastern Classics, 1983), 18–20.

If the Seven Years' War was a military dress rehearsal for the Continental Army leaders, then the Albany Congress of 1754 was the first dress rehearsal for the Continental Congress. The Albany Congress called for a union of the existing twelve colonies headed by a Crown appointed president to provide for common defense and legislature for the colonies western boundary. Despite the plan's ultimate rejection, the Albany Congress was "unprecedented in its potential for creating colonial cooperation," and facilitated the coalescing of powerful periphery colonial leaders, many of whom would later serve on the Continental Congress.³²

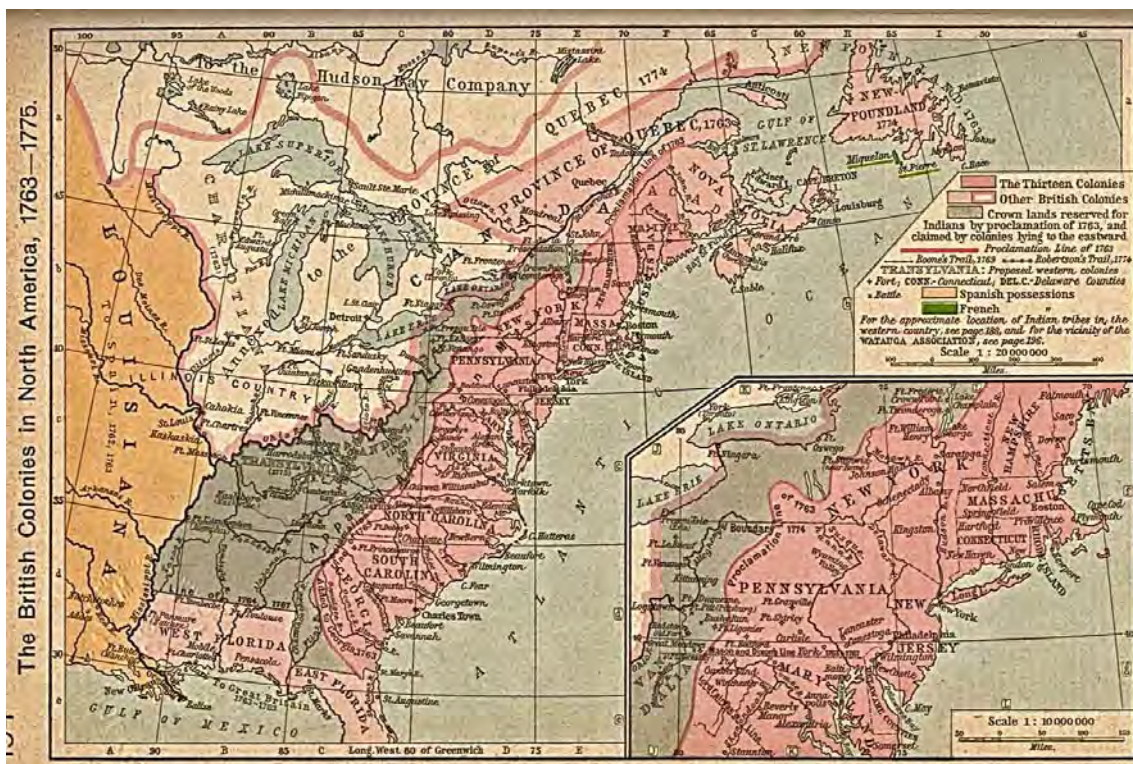


Figure 2. British North America circa 1775

C. CATALYSTS TOWARDS CONFLICT

The first wave, characterized by weakened relations, abruptly ends with the Proclamation Act of 1763. The issuance of this act and the series of acts between 1763 and 1765 were unprecedented and pulverized a portion of society into a state of

³² Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 84.

disharmony. The colonist's reactions to these acts that they viewed as both escalating and patronizing in nature were for the British just simple imperial house cleaning tools. This second wave, Catalyst Towards Conflict, despite only spanning from 1763–1765, is loaded with a number of key actions that did not resynchronize, but in fact, exacerbated the disequilibrium between the state and society and prompted the rise of the counter-state.

The intent of the Proclamation Act of 1763 was to organize newly acquired British territories, display a non-encroachment posture to the interior Indians in an effort to prevent future conflagrations like Pontiac's War, and facilitate the regulation of legal trade. The act however, angered the colonists by prohibiting them from expanding west and decreasing the possibility of obtaining riches. Furthermore, the colonists saw the Proclamation as a rescinding of their imperial partnership, and subordination to the Crown's sovereignty. Serving as a daily reminder of their subservience to King George III was the British Army. The decision to keep British forces in North America angered the colonists, served as a daily reminder of their inferiority, and fostered ill will.³³

To further inflame the colonists' irritation, the then Prime Minister for King George III, George Grenville began to unveil his multi-step program to stabilize Britain's national debt. The first measure, the Sugar Act, passed in 1764 was not perceived by Parliament to be onerous. Specifically, the act sought to improve customs enforcement, establish new taxes for select items, and adjust tax rates for other items. To the colonists, the act was an attack on commerce "that appeared to be in no American's interest...which seemed to threaten the foreign West Indian trade that sustained the economies of colonies like Rhode Island."³⁴ To the individual consumer, this act

³³ Douglas Edward Leach, *Roots of Conflict: British Armed Forces and Colonial Americans, 1677–1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986). Leach asserts that the presence of British military in the colonies beginning in the late 17th century was nothing new and was a tool for the British to administer to the colonies and that over time its very presence fostered ill will. Anderson cites economic and security reasons as to why the British left such a sizable force in the post-war years. Anderson, *Crucible of War*.

³⁴ Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765–1776* (New York: Norton and Company, 1991), 10.

affected their rights and facilitated an anti-act popular mobilization.³⁵ Fundamentally, they believed their right to govern and tax themselves was being attacked. The colonist's responses and objections to this act and the forthcoming Stamp Act were limited and unilateral in nature. For example the New York Assembly, like that of the unsynchronized efforts from assemblies in Connecticut, Massachusetts, North and South Carolina, New Jersey and Rhode Island passed resolutions or sent protests to their agents in London to assert their position that Parliament had no right to regulate internal taxes.³⁶

The second and third steps of the Grenville legislation, the Currency Act of 1764 and the Quartering Act of 1765, added to the ever-increasing division between Britain and the colonists. The Currency Act sought to rid the colonies of all currencies currently passing as legal tender. As for the Quartering Act, it sought to extend proper support to British military elements operating in America. The reverberations from both acts were largely financial in nature and to the colonists a harsh attack on their welfare. Arguing the economic disparity between the few prominent colonists and Britain, Charles Beard asserted that the strong, unwavering policy put forth by Britain did not bode well for a harmonious union with the money-classed, rich colonists, but further assisted with enlarging the disparity between the two groups and compelled the same men to act to protect their interests.³⁷

The most significant event to occur contributing to the surging political and economic disequilibrium in the colonies was the Stamp Act. Passed in 1765, the act directed, "before any sheet of paper could be used in a court proceeding or sold from a press, it would have to carry a small stamp to show that the duty for its intended use had been paid."³⁸ The colonial response to this act, as well as the subsequent interplay of action and reaction of the emerging counter-state and Britain, characterize the next wave.

³⁵ T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

³⁶ Don Cook, *The Long Fuse: How England Lost the American Colonies, 1760–1785* (New York, New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), 62.

³⁷ Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: The Free Press, 1986).

³⁸ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 644.

D. FAILED STRATEGIES

The unprecedented and seemingly capricious nature of Britain's legislation—to regulate its Empire—that characterized the second wave prompted both violent and non-violent protest from the colonists. These colonial strategies characterize the emergence and disappearance of the third wave—the wave of Failed Strategies. Over the course of the next eight years, 1765–1774, both the colonist and Britain's attempt to repair the existing disequilibrium caused their relationship to fray. Such intent manifested itself in several acts and significant events like the Stamp Act Congress, the Declaratory Act, the Boston Tea Party, and many others.

The colonial reaction to the Stamp Act was one of resounding denunciation via violent and non-violent means. For instance, with Patrick Henry's leadership, Virginia's House of Burgesses passed the Virginia Resolves, which in effect stated Parliament did not have the right to tax Virginia. In other places like Massachusetts, colonists destroyed a stamp collector's office, while nine of the thirteen colonies sent delegates to meet in New York as a part of the Stamp Act Congress.

The consequences of the Stamp Act are many, but none more important than in the colonists' ability to begin organizing themselves publically and secretly—the emergence of the counter-state. The act led to the colonists to create such resistance organizations as the Loyal Nine and the Sons of Liberty. The formation of such collective identity groups was a radical departure from the old societal ways versus the characterization of Monarchy, patronage and subjects.³⁹ Now centered on collective rights these groups sought to achieve freedom from British control. The Stamp Act provided the provincial assemblies with a venue for a new level of cooperation amongst all the colonies and above all created an opportunity for the colonists to organize politically and overturn the “truncated society”⁴⁰ that had previously stunted upward

³⁹ Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 244.

⁴⁰ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 108–124.

mobility of the colonists. The official voice of this collective political arm embodied itself in the Stamp Act Congress, which declared in unison that only colonial assemblies could make laws for the colonies.

The distribution of pamphlets citing that Britain was threatening colonial liberties, further coalesced the masses behind anti-British sentiment, and thereby increased the ideological disparity. Bernard Bailyn, in his survey of pre-war pamphlets—the internet of the day—argued that liberty was the capacity to exercise ‘natural rights’ within the powers set by men through legislation.⁴¹ In addition, when the jurisdiction of that legislation was threatened, rebellion is logical.⁴²

Ultimately, Britain repealed the Stamp Act with the passage of the Declaratory Act in 1766. It is a short-lived victory for the colonists and did very little to correct the rising level of disparity. The reason can be found directly from the wording of the new act, which stated Britain will retain the right “to have, full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America, subjects of the Crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever.”⁴³ Parliament could not bear to have the colonies believe that it was not the supreme decision maker. More importantly, Parliament wanted the colonies to understand it could tax all colonies both internally or externally.

In attempting to re-assert its overall power, Parliament next passes a series of five acts, labeled the Townshend Acts, beginning in 1767. The intent of these acts was to establish Parliament’s right to tax the colonies, further enforce colonial compliance of trade regulations, punish New York for not complying with the Quartering Act of 1765, and allow colonial Governors and judges independence from colonial rule. The result of such legislation was continued agitation of the colonists demonstrating what Historian Pauline Maier described as “an important corrosion of that ultimate faith in British rule

⁴¹ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 77.

⁴² Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, Chapter 4.

⁴³ Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents of American History* (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1968).

which characterized the Stamp Act resistance, and which had survived even into the opening years of opposition to the Townshend Act.”⁴⁴ Britain’s strategy to use legislation in enforcing obedience was not going to succeed.

The successful enforcement of the Townshend Acts, ironically, further galvanized the colonists and increased their level of opposition to British actions. The colonial response, after the failure of their petitions, was a series of non-importation agreements. These agreements, separately established by each colony, were a non-violent means for colonists “to recover their liberty, one, moreover, that was legal and seemed to promise success.”⁴⁵ Besides the economic ramifications, the effects of non-importation on the colonialists were astounding. Non-importation led to a widening of the support base from within the population. For organizations like the Sons of Liberty, it led to the creation of various local associations that would serve as social compacts, and it highlighted how colonial organizations were quickly assuming *de facto* authority.⁴⁶ Despite its partial repeal in 1770, the damage done by the Townshend Acts was irreversible and according to Maier, “the colonists had begun to advance along the road from resistance to revolution.”⁴⁷

The remaining years between the repeal of the Townshend Acts to the beginning of 1774 saw increased tensions and a rise in the number of violent and forceful acts in opposition to British policy. First, there was the unforgettable moment in 1770 in Boston where British soldiers opened fire on an American mob. Next, there was the attack on the HMS *Gaspee*, a British customs schooner, carried out in opposition to the unpopular British trade regulations. Last, came the Boston Tea Party in 1773, in which a large group of colonists dressed as Mohawk Indians boarded three vessels dumping all tea cargo into the harbor. The actions of the colonists during this period illustrated the on-

⁴⁴ Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution*, 114.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 14–138.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

going division of ideas and policies between the counter-state and the state. The ability to repair the existing disequilibrium was almost impossible and polarization continued unchecked.

E. POPULAR PREFERENCES

Certainly, the years and events to this point, before the outbreak of open hostilities, had an effect on the population. What did the colonists prefer and value? What follows is a quick survey of what Gordon McCormick calls *pure* preferences. Pure preferences are defined by McCormick as a person's choices made based on a preferred outcome without regard to the probabilities of that outcome. Conversely, *effective* preferences are choices made based on both the *pure* preference and the likelihood that it will be the outcome. The following are a survey of *pure* preferences of colonial America circa 1770s; all of which General Gage, with ten plus years of service in North America, would have surely known.⁴⁸

"Approach the Almighty with Reverence, thy Prince with Submission, thy Parents with Obedience, and thy Master with Respect was the conventional advice given to all."⁴⁹ This commonplace advice embodies the notion that colonial society preferred political dependence on the Crown. With that said the colonists believed the principle of self-government was the founding idea behind the establishment of the colonies in North America.⁵⁰ Rectifying this seeming contradiction was the job of the various colonial courts as well as the legislative assemblies. These were the locations "that local communities reaffirmed their hierarchical relationships and reconciled their various obligations."⁵¹

The above advice also supports Historian Gordon Wood's assertion that "[f]amily relationships determined the nature of most people's lives."⁵² A family's economic and

⁴⁸ McCormick and Giordano, "Things Come Together," *Third World Quarterly*, 295–320.

⁴⁹ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 43.

⁵⁰ Allen French, *The First Year of the American Revolution* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934), 3.

⁵¹ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 72.

⁵² Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 45.

social power was rooted in their land. The more land owned, the more social and economic power. However, because the geography dictated the relative small size of communities, mutual support between the families of a community was essential. Added to this dynamic was the belief that every land-holding family had a right to a share of the government.⁵³ The colonial practice of deferring to economic and social superiors rectified this seeming contradiction. In practice, these elites ruled by popular consent.⁵⁴

The colonist's collective preferences—their desire for high social and economic status, thereby increasing their political influence via the local courts—were fundamentally rooted in their belief in the rights of the individual. In particular, the colonists held in high regard and closely guarded three rights: freedom of religion, economic choice, and self-defense. The foundation of the colonies was not on any particular religious allegiance. As such, the colonists were free “to adopt such mode of religious Worship as they liked best.”⁵⁵ This freedom of choice and practice of religion naturally became a guarded belief. Because the political order of the colonies rested with the few who had achieved economic prosperity, what naturally followed was the individual desire to choose his economic endeavors. The dominant economic interest and subsequent livelihood of individuals was carrying on trade and shipbuilding in the north, producing and selling the product of plantations in the middle and southern colonies, and trading in the western portion of all colonies.⁵⁶ The right to self-defense aggregately manifested itself in the local militias. The local militias, the provincial Governor's army, had prevailed in the previous wars and relied on the volunteerism of individually armed men, and thus the militia had become a common collective and individual practice.⁵⁷

⁵³ Jack P. Greene, *Understanding the American Revolution: Issues and Actors* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 12.

⁵⁴ Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed*, 123.

⁵⁵ Greene, *Understanding the American Revolution*, 13.

⁵⁶ Arthur M. Schlesinger, “The American Revolution Reconsidered,” in *The Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution* (Chicago: Quadrangle Book, 1966), 103–114 & 106–107.

⁵⁷ Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence*, 7.

The salience of these rights is embodied in General Nathanael Green's comment, "It is next to impossible [sic] to unhinge the prejudices that people have for places and things they have long been connected with."⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence*, 7.

III. THE GENERAL GAGE CHRONICLES

“If you determine on the contrary to support your pleasures, it should be done with as little delay as possible, and as Powerfully as you are able, for it is easier to crush evils in their infancy, then when grown to Maturity.”

—General Thomas Gage, *Letter to Secretary at War, 1775*⁵⁹

A. THE PROPHET RETURNS

Charged with enforcing what many Americans called the Intolerable Acts—the British legislative action taken in response to Boston Tea Party—and restoring security to the provinces, General Gage returned to Boston on 17 May 1774. He arrived to no fanfare. Instead, he inherited a society in the midst of a political, social and economic transformation due to the rising tensions between Britain and the counter-state. Yet, General Gage was more than capable of completing the task.

General Gage was well versed in colonial life. He presided over, and implemented, every major policy decision in the colonies from 1763, until his return to Britain in 1775. His position took him to the farthest outposts in America and constantly challenged him as he witnessed the colonist’s disparity grow. Despite his ten plus years of commanding in North America, or his marriage to an American wife, Gage’s loyalty to the Crown never diminished. Gage “believed firmly then in the full sovereignty of Britain over her empire,”⁶⁰ and was quick to employ military forces to solve *any* problem.

Thomas Gage purchased his commission into the English Army as a Second Lieutenant in January 1741, and grew to be a respected officer who was nicknamed “Honest Tom” by his peers. “In everything [Gage] seemed a composed, persistent man, who saw his duty and followed it.”⁶¹ In 1754, Lt. Col. Gage was part of a British

⁵⁹ Clarence Edwin Carter, *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage with the Secretaries of State, 1763–1775* (Hamden: Yale University Press, 1931), volume II, 671–672.

⁶⁰ John R. Alden, *General Gage in America: Being principally a history of his role in the American Revolution* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1948), 152.

⁶¹ French, *First Year of the American Revolution*, 13.

contingent sent to America to deal with the French forces attacking His Majesty's troops and possessions. Unknowingly, he would not return to England for over 18 years.

General Gage's first battle as a commander was an absolute failure. While leading the vanguard unit of Braddock's Expeditionary Force to capture Fort Duquesne in 1755, Gage committed several errors; mistakes that contributed to the overall defeat of the British force. Gage's failure at the tactical level was the first in a long line of less-than-stellar performances. Despite his poor battlefield record, Gage did possess an innovative spirit. In 1757, he proposed, and later created, a light infantry unit that was better suited to meet the threats facing the British Army in a woodland environment. Additionally, as time progressed, Gage earned the reputation of a politically savvy leader who fought bravely in combat.⁶²

With the issuance of the Proclamation Act, General Gage assumed the position of commander-in-chief of British forces in North America. While in command, Gage came to the realization that there was a "fixed disposition on the part of many Americans to have it their own way, whether within or without the empire."⁶³ Perhaps General Gage's comment in 1766 was arbitrary concerning the foreshadowing of the American Revolution; or perhaps his observations were more astute than his actions during these times may have suggested. Whatever the case, the British Parliament officially took steps to dismantle the colonial rebels—as opposed to restore the equilibrium through the political mechanisms that had existed and been the strategy to that point in time.

General Gage was charged with restoring security to a disequibrated society. Whether that disparity was a result of errors by the Crown to usurp an Englishman's

⁶² Alden, *General Gage in America*, 13–14.

⁶³ Alden, *General Gage in America*, 152.

rights,⁶⁴ correct economic grievances,⁶⁵ or deny notions of liberty,⁶⁶ General Gage had to act to achieve the political end-state provided him; enforce the Boston Port Act and ensure pacification of Massachusetts.⁶⁷

B. POLITICAL PROVIDENCE: ONE DOOR CLOSES, TWELVE OPEN

1. The State Opts for Coercion

Arriving in May of 1774, Gage brought with him the first of Britain's Intolerable Acts, the Boston Port Bill. Overall, the acts were the Crown's punitive response to the Boston Tea Party. This first bill charged General Gage with closing the port of Boston until the colony made reparations to the Crown and the East India Company. Despite his intentions to thoroughly carry out the policy, Gage proceeded cautiously taking aim not to enrage the people who felt unjustly punished for the acts of so few. Though Gage followed all port closure requirements, he did utilize discretion by not choosing to enforce an arrest of the bellicose treasurers who refused the act's stipulations. Even more, he was entirely accommodating to the slow proceedings in the Massachusetts General Court, which was convening to determine the process of repayment; so accommodating in fact, that he prevented individual payments from concerned Loyalists. Nevertheless, fractionalization paralyzed the Assembly and repayment never materialized. Moreover, the next few weeks of June gave rise to a more pressing problem.⁶⁸

2. The Counter-State Seeks to Mobilize

On 5 June 1774, rebel Joseph Warren completed his plan to protest the British Act. The Solemn League and Covenant, completed and circulated by the extra-legal Committee for Correspondence, called for an immediate ban on trade relations with

⁶⁴ William Gordon, *The History of The Rise, Progress, and Establishment of the Independent United States of America*, Vol. I (London, 1788).

⁶⁵ Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*, Chapter XI.

⁶⁶ Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Chapter 3.

⁶⁷ Bruce Lancaster, *The American Revolution* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), 84.

⁶⁸ Benjamin Woods Labaree, *The Boston Tea Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 224.

Britain in protest of the Port Act. Nevertheless, local Massachusetts's tradesmen, fearing for their livelihood, continued to conduct business as usual. The rebels, unflinching, circulated the idea that the Covenant was gaining support. Ultimately, the Covenant went contested throughout Massachusetts until later in the fall, but the unwavering rebels did not stop in Massachusetts and sent the Covenant to the other colonies via Committees of Correspondence.⁶⁹

Upon receipt of the news of the Boston Port Bill, and news from the Committees, other colonial assemblies faced an upsurge in public sympathy for the innocent and virtuous Bostonians. Additionally, some assemblies faced a small but loud radical call to immediately support the Covenant. However, most colonies viewed such action as highly ill advisable. In New York, the council of Fifty-one—the organization created to oust the radical influence on the Committees of Correspondence—called for a general congress of the colonies to obstruct the radical call for full support. The rebel's call for immediate action was tempered by the moderate's call to a congress.⁷⁰

As soon as Sam Adams heard that other colonies were favorable to a general congress, he strengthened his efforts to unify Massachusetts under opposition. On 17 June 1775, Adams hoodwinked the Assembly. During the initial Assembly meetings in June, Adams had secretly garnered support from a majority of Assembly members to send a delegation to the general Congress—as recommended by the New York Committee of Correspondence. In a rather juvenile act, Adams locked all Assembly members in and called for a vote on whether or not to send the delegation. Clamor ensued and a Loyalist escaped, under the guise of sickness, to inform Gage. Upon learning that the Massachusetts Assembly was gravitating towards the general colonial Congress, Gage immediately sent a trusted Loyalist to dissolve the Assembly.

⁶⁹ Labaree, *The Boston Tea Party*, 225–227.

⁷⁰ John C. Miller, *Origins of the American Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1943), 363–365.

Nevertheless, his unilateral and unprecedented reactions were too late.⁷¹ Adams had secured legal sanction to send the delegation, and then acquiesced to Gage's direction.⁷²

3. Gage Acts against the Political Union

Gage was tirelessly working with moderates to counter the inflammatory actions of the rebels in Massachusetts. However, the slow comings of the Port Bill proceedings, and his misinterpretation of the moderates victory in their call for a congress prompted Gage to act decisively. Acting without colonial assembly approval or Britain's consent, Gage, on 29 June 1774, issued a proclamation that identified any signatory to the covenant as a criminal.⁷³

Unsuccessful attempts by Gage to enforce the proclamation characterized the next few months. He attempted to bring charges against radical leaders, but was unsuccessful due in large part to the fractionalization of the institutions he was relying on to prosecute them—mainly the General Court. He removed known radicals from military and political appointments, and simultaneously attempted to bribe them into moderation.⁷⁴ However, both of these endeavors time and again proved unsuccessful.

C. POWDER-LESS IS POWERLESS

1. Gage Builds, then Mounts Forays into the Countryside

In the wake of his unsuccessful verbal attempts to subdue rebel leaders, Gage began to make military preparations for the danger he foresaw. His writings to General Haldimand in New York on 14 July 1774 suggested the inception of a new preemptive strategy. "We are threatened here with open opposition by arms everyday [...] I would

⁷¹ It is important to note that Gage was not authorized to interfere with the political procedures of Massachusetts Assembly. The Massachusetts Government Act and the Administration of Justice Act had not yet reached the colonies upon their enactment on May 20, 1774, and were sent on June 3rd from England. Clarence Edwin Carter, *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage with the Secretaries of State, 1763–1775*, volume I, 358–359.

⁷² A.J. Langguth, *Patriots: The Men Who Started the American Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 198–199.

⁷³ Alden, *General Gage in America*, 207–208 and Clarence Edwin Carter, *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage with the Secretaries of State, 1763–1775*, volume I, 358–359.

⁷⁴ Alden, *General Gage in America*, 208.

be prepared against it.”⁷⁵ His previous communications to Carleton in Canada in late June also suggested that a new strategy was forthcoming. The directions stipulated that two regiments from Canada be sent to Boston to augment the five already there. Gage now had approximately 4,000 troops.

On 1 September 1774, Gage began his new strategy.⁷⁶ His military would systematically disarm the radicals and thus prevent war. The first attempt was an overwhelming tactical success. At 4:30 a.m., Colonel Madison, at the direction of Gage, led 260 men to seize the military stores in Somerville. They infiltrated by boat from Boston through the Mystic River. Upon docking a half-mile away from the stores, the force met the local sheriff and store caretaker, Colonel Phips. With the Colonel’s assistance, the British seized over 250 powder kegs and other military equipment. The operation caught the countryside by surprise, robbing the colonists of what they perceived as their stores. Yet, the rebels did not let Gage’s victory go unchecked.⁷⁷

2. The Counter-State Terrorizes and Propagandizes: Gage Capitulates

Rumors that “war had begun, that six people had been killed, that the King’s ships were bombarding Boston” helped fuel the mob attacks on Loyalists in the days following Gage’s foray. Prominent rebels, utilizing propaganda like this, vectored angry mobs to terrorize Loyalists working for the state.⁷⁸ William Brattle, the Loyalist that prompted Gage to act on Somerville for fear that the rebels might move the military stores, fled to Castle William in fear of his life; he remained a fugitive for his remainder years. The Colonel that provided the keys for the storehouse to the raiding force, David Phips, was forced into resigning his political and military positions. A local, Loyalist Customs Commissioner fled a violent mob and never returned to his government job. Though the violence and mob mentality did subside, Britain’s new series of Parliamentary Acts scheduled for enforcement was certain to affect the emerging cooler heads.

⁷⁵ Alden, *General Gage in America*, 209.

⁷⁶ Carter, *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage*, 369.

⁷⁷ David Hackett Fischer, *Paul Revere’s Ride* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 44–46.

⁷⁸ Fischer, *Paul Revere’s Ride*, 46.

In accordance with the mandates of the Massachusetts Government Act, Gage dissolved the Massachusetts Assembly and emplaced a new one; to which the counter-state responded. On 27 August 1774, Gage received the new Parliamentary Act and immediately began to implement it.⁷⁹ Though he does notice the protests against the enforcement, he was effective at filling the government positions from Loyalists within the town of Boston. In a letter to Lord Dartmouth in late August, Gage astutely pointed out that the act and subsequent insertion of placemen inflamed the rebels who had lately taken their opposition to the countryside. Their response was threats; especially to those who would support the government. The medium by which they would deliver these threats was handbills (Figure 3: Rebel Handbill circa September 1774). The rebels' threats did not stop at the door of the Loyalists. The threats also extended to moderates and political neutrals. These threats took the form of statements like: the state will "take your land for the rates, and make you and your children slaves," and that the Crown representatives would "seize your pleasant habitations...your wives and daughter."⁸⁰

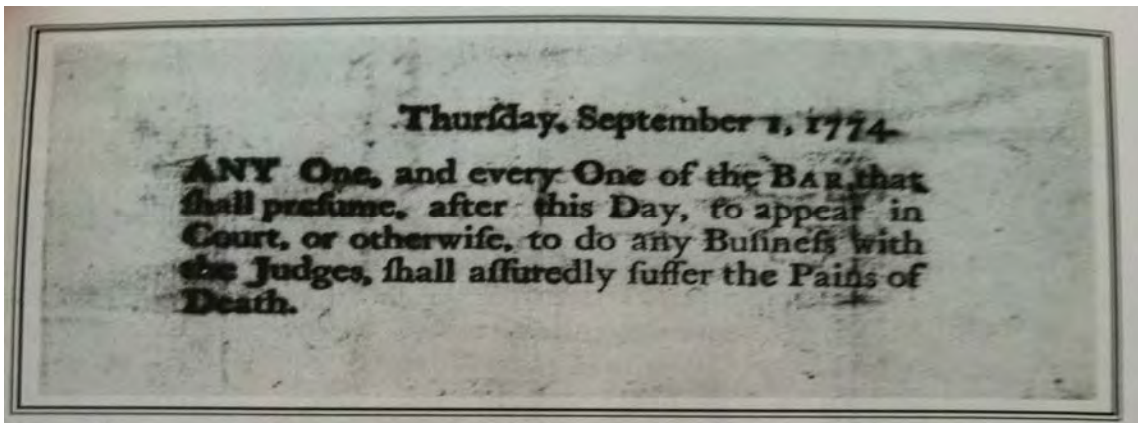


Figure 3. Rebel Handbill circa September 1774⁸¹

This colonial reaction took Gage by surprise. It so astounded Gage, that he deserted a later attempt to raid the storehouse in Worcester.⁸² He went even further,

⁷⁹ Carter, *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage*, 365.

⁸⁰ Miller, *Origins of the American Revolution*, 372.

⁸¹ Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, 50.

⁸² Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, 48.

when he sent messages to Britain recommending the repeal of the Acts until they could be enforced.⁸³ Gage's nerves were certainly rattled, but there was reason for him to be optimistic.

3. The Counter-State Submits a Petition and Boycotts: Gage Recovers Nerves

The rebels, while trying to utilize the Acts as propaganda to mobilize support behind their efforts, had also begun to develop a cohesive political union. The Continental Congress met for the first time on 5 September 1774. Gage, fully aware of their assembly, held the belief that the small outspoken radical delegates from Massachusetts would be compelled to accept reconciliation by the moderates of the other colonies.⁸⁴ His belief went unproven.

September and October again brought disbelief to General Gage. The Continental Congress had fallen into the hands of the radicals.⁸⁵ At the helm of the Congress, the radicals achieved two monumental feats. The first was a common acceptance on an agreement of non-importation. The second was to develop and transmit their political goals via their petition to the King.

Upon hearing of this unification and boycott, Gage decided to expand his disarmament strategy. Early in December, Gage ordered all colonial officials to stop the importation of armaments and to secure all munitions in colonial storehouses. The rebels got wind of this statement and acted first. On 12–13 December 1774, Paul Revere rode from Boston to Portsmouth to warn the Committees of Gage's intentions and to secure the stores from Fort William and Mary before the British arrived. The Committees acted quickly, seizing all munitions from the storehouse on 14 December. Gage, informed by the Loyalist messengers of Governor Wentworth, responded too late. The relocation of all munitions was complete by the time the HMS Scarborough arrived on scene. Though

⁸³ David Ammerman, *In the Common Cause: American Response to the Coercive Acts of 1774* (New York: Norton, 1975), 129

⁸⁴ Miller, *Origins of the American Revolution*, 385, and Carter, *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage*, 367.

⁸⁵ Miller, *Origins of the American Revolution*, 390.

this was an overt act of rebellion with known participants, Gage did not arrest the guilty rebels. His absolute belief in the laws of the lands, which prescribed for due process through the radical influenced colonial courts, prevented his preference for employing the military to effect arrests. Furthermore, this military loss would soon be overshadowed.⁸⁶

4. Gage Prompted and Chooses to Raid into Hell

Upon hearing the news of the seating of the Continental Congress and of the failure towards quieting the rebellion, the King and Parliament pushed for more action. Lord Dartmouth, writing in late January 1775, directed Gage to act more decisively. Dartmouth reminded him that the Governor is empowered to exercise martial law in time of rebellion.⁸⁷ The letter arrived in America as Gage was preparing to launch another anti-powder raid. Feeling supported by his superiors Gage launched a raid to recover the stores in Concord. On 19 April 1775, over 800 elite British troops marched from the city of Boston. The results of the battle between the Massachusetts militiamen and the best of the British military resulted in an astonishing British defeat. The retreating British forces from Concord entered Boston only to face another series of on-going problems.⁸⁸

D. THE WOES OF ISOLATION

1. Gage Consolidates

As early as September 1774, and exacerbated by the Somerville Powder Alarm, Gage began and directed “the concentration of troops in places where they would be as ready as possible for action in the event of another crisis in relations between the Mother Country and the Colonies.”⁸⁹ For the Soldier this meant moving into tents on Boston Common. The basis of the decision was on two judgments. The first was self-preservation, or more simply, that Soldier actions can better be controlled and protected if

⁸⁶ Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, 53–57.

⁸⁷ Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, 76.

⁸⁸ Two unbiased works that detail the 19 April Battle are: Frank Warren Coburn, *The Battle of April 19th, 1775* (Lexington, 1912) & Allen French, *The Day of Concord and Lexington: The Nineteenth of April, 1775* (Boston, 1925).

⁸⁹ Alden, *General Gage in America*, 152 & Clarence Edwin Carter, *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage with the Secretaries of State, 1763–1775*, volume II, 652.

contained in one area, thus preventing another Boston Massacre, or the threatening of isolated troops. The second is that missions and operations were to be better planned and prepared for when necessary. To further ensure his troops were not put at any unnecessary risk, Gage, against the council of his Admiral, opted only for securing Boston Neck leaving the more predominant features like Dorchester Heights and Bunker Hill unoccupied.⁹⁰ However, this military reinforcement, or over-consolidation, of Boston signaled war to the colonists and that the immediate problems were generated from within.

2. Gage Searches for a Lifeline and Finds Trouble

The immediate problem resulting from consolidation was the ability to properly resource the military force in Boston. The obvious answer to the problem was to conduct foraging operations. Within striking distance from the Boston Port, the British Navy could put out and secure the resources of neighboring islands like Noodle and Hogg Islands. (See Figure 4: Boston Map) On one such endeavor, the Royal Navy schooner *Diana* was lost to the rebels. It occurred on 27–28 May 1775, when a British foraging force encountered elements of the rebel army. In an effort to cutoff the rebels, the HMS *Diana* was ordered up Chelsea Creek, where she ran aground and was eventually overwhelmed, raided and burned by the rebels. Although this battle resulted in small number of British killed, this type of engagement over provisions was the rule and not the exception during the siege of Boston.⁹¹

3. The Continental Army Introduces Itself

A later problem arose when Gage's decision to over-consolidate met the Continental Army, which now held the initiative. The initial plan to break the siege was to attack and secure Dorchester, Cambridge and then Charlestown. The plan maximized British Army strengths against the weaknesses of the rebel defenses. However, the rebel intelligence system intercepted this information. In early June 1775, the rebels, in

⁹⁰ French, *First Year of the American Revolution*, 19–21.

⁹¹ French, *First Year of the American Revolution*, 193. Additional well known battles include Machias, Stontington and Gloucester.

preemptive fashion, began to fortify the hills, which were in harassing distance, via cannon, to Gage's troops in Boston as well as his patrolling ships. The rebel army commander, Artemus Ward, had chosen Bunker Hill as his defensive line because it commanded both the land and sea routes in every direction. Yet, on the morning of 16 June 1775, William Prescott, the rebel's second in command for the battle, arose to find that the first in command for the battle, Israel Putnam had directed the fortification of Breed's Hill. Presumably from this position, Putnam could range the British lines with his cannons. Therefore, Prescott reinforced Putnam's redoubt with a defensive line to the north of the redoubt completing the rebel's defensive posture.⁹²

The British held a war council on the morning of 17 June to determine their tactical strategy. British Major General Henry Clinton proposed a landing to the rear of the fortifications. However, Major General Howe believed that the defensive positions were weak and their original plan to land east of Charlestown and roll up the defenses was still the most valid option. Gage believed that putting his army between the rebel army at Breed's Hill and Cambridge broke a maxim and therefore sided with Howe. Furthermore, he directed that provisions be taken to follow up their successes with an attack at Dorchester.⁹³

The results of the battle were staggering for the British. Well-known historian, John Alden, called the battle, "one of the most sanguinary battles of the eighteenth century."⁹⁴ The British were tactically triumphant, but at a Pyrrhic cost. Though the rebels' suffered about 400 casualties, the British reported over 1,000. The British could not afford such a blow for it effectively wiped out any advantages gained from the reinforcements that arrived in May of 1775. The loss of so many soldiers prompted a renewed effort to mobilize more resources for the British Army.

⁹² French, *First Year of the American Revolution*, 208–219.

⁹³ French, *First Year of the American Revolution*, 220–223.

⁹⁴ John Richard Alden, *The American Revolution, 1775–1783* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), 38–41



Figure 4. Boston Map circa 1775

E. THE FRENCH AND INDIAN PLAN UNDERMINED

1. The Scramble for Friends

As early as August 1774, Gage took steps to secure an alliance with the Indians in North America. The rebels too saw the benefits of securing alliances with the Indians and began in earnest to obtain treaties. The rebels were the first to strike successfully. In April of 1775, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress accepted Indian enlistment into the ranks of their army.⁹⁵ Despite the rebels' best effort, the Indians gravitated in greater

⁹⁵ French, *First Year of the American Revolution*, 405.

number—upwards of 13,000—towards the British side due to fear of western colonial expansion.⁹⁶ However, employing the Indians to the benefit of the Crown was a separate problem.

2. Friends Without Benefits

The story of Guy Johnson, Superintendent to the Indians in North America, illuminated why the British were unsuccessful at capitalizing on the numerical superiority of their Indian allies. Appointed in July of 1775 and directed in May of 1775 to mobilize the Indians of the Seven Nations to help the Governor and military commander in British Canada, Guy Carleton, Guy Johnson was more than successful.⁹⁷ Johnson arrived in Quebec with allies of five of seven of the Iroquois League only to be stifled by Carleton. Carleton would allow only limited employment of the Indians under fear of them committing atrocities.⁹⁸ Disgruntled, Johnson traveled to England only to discover he was to have no authority in Canada. However, before hearing this answer, the King's response to the news of the victory at Bunker Hill beat Johnson to the port from where he most likely departed.

F. THE PROPHET RECALLED

In July 1775 news of Bunker Hill had reached England. In a matter of days, the King recalled Gage. Receiving word of his recall, Gage's reflection before sailing home to England was not exactly prophetic. "The Dye is Cast, and tho' the Rebels have been better prepared than any Body would believe, Affairs are not desperate if the Nation will exert her force."⁹⁹ But were Gage's prophetic words—at least in terms of Britain's

⁹⁶ For numbers of Indian fighters, see Jack P. Greene, *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Blackwell Reference, 1991), 393. For a more comprehensive look at Indian affairs and their concerns during the American Revolution: Colin G. Galloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁹⁷ Carter, *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage*, 173.

⁹⁸ French, *First Year of the American Revolution*, 413.

⁹⁹ Carter, *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage*, 696.

eventual military exertions—just that, or had his actions taken steps to, in his own words, “crush evils in their infancy” and thus prevent escalation to a world war?¹⁰⁰

Gage’s strategy to target the counter-state’s political arm, which manifested in the dissolution of the Assembly and subsequent efforts to enforce the anti-Covenant proclamation, facilitated the organization of two radical groups. Meeting extra-legally in Suffolk County to avoid dispersal by Gage, the radicals were left unchecked from a forceless Gage and adopted the Suffolk Resolves in mid-September. The Suffolk Resolves, formally entered into the records of the First Continental Congress, called for the adoption of a non-importation agreement and ultimately facilitated the creation of the Continental Association.¹⁰¹

The second radical organization arose when Gage removed radical leaders from their political positions. He escalated to this removal process because his attempts to bribe radical leaders went unsuccessful. This strategy opened the radical’s eyes. The colonists, already angered at British placemen at the time, now collapsed to radical pressure to preempt such placement of Loyalists by removing them completely from leadership positions. Nowhere was change more predominant than in the militia in the summer of 1774.¹⁰² Fearful of the growing Loyalist support to Gage, the radicals successfully removed all personnel deemed to be supportive of the Crown from the militia.

Gage’s anti-powder strategy, which manifested in the tactical mission at—among other locations—Lexington and Concord, facilitated opportunities for growth for the state and the weakening of the counter-state. However, the critical element for success in this strategy was the employment of information operations and operations that mitigated the effects of charismatic leaders; both of which Gage failed. The onslaught of rebel rumors circulating via the popular mediums of the time went unanswered by the state. The rebels took advantage of exploiting the population’s fears by manipulating reality to portray an

¹⁰⁰ Carter, *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage*, 671–672.

¹⁰¹ Edmond Cody Burnett, *The Continental Congress* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1941), Chapter 3.

¹⁰² French, *First Year of the American Revolution*, 37.

evil empire that was trying to strip the colonists of their liberties, while the state called the fighters cowards. What is more, was Gage's unwillingness to militarily bring known boisterous rebels in because of his strict adherence to law. Such inaction allowed the rebels to hijack the first Congress and compel colonists into action against Britain.¹⁰³ Both these shortcomings provided an opportunity for the counter-state to grow, be it internal strength around charismatic leaders or in mass support.

Gage's strategy of consolidation allowed for the isolation of British forces in Boston, limited his tactical options, facilitated the space necessary for the rebels grow, and highlighted internal organization problems. By consolidating his forces in one location, Gage made his forces easily observable and the job of pacifying the countryside much more difficult. While pent up in Boston, Artemus Ward and later George Washington needed only a small sliver of resources to monitor the British Army. Communication to the countryside of any internal British movements occurred very easily and quickly. Furthermore, should Gage act to achieve his goals, he now had to accomplish an additional task of breaking through his own created isolation zone. These breakthroughs resulted in foraging battles and the battle on Bunker and Breed's Hill. These battles significantly weakened Gage's military organization.

At the same time Gage's organization was deteriorating, the rebel counter-state was solidifying its own organizational structure. Gage's provision of space through consolidation, allowed the counter-state to begin the process of internal organization. This was most evident in the actions of the second Continental Congress in the early portion of May 1775. With the siege in full swing, the Congress created committees to run the war effort, and their first unifying action was to appoint George Washington as the Continental Army Commander on 14 June 1775.¹⁰⁴ The second major action that the Congress took was to answer the political inquiries from all the disparate colonies. An excellent illustration of this was the Congress's response to the Massachusetts Assembly's request to be represented in full by Congress. Congress's reply directed that Massachusetts organize their own political organization to run its internal affairs, while

¹⁰³ Burnett, *The Continental Congress*, Chapter 1.

¹⁰⁴ Burnett, *The Continental Congress*, Chapter 4.

Congress ran the war effort. Furthermore, Congress shouldered the colonial union's political desires, which was most evident in the Olive Branch ratified and sent to George III on 5 July 1775.¹⁰⁵ Though ultimately never read by George III, the petition represented a more unified, less ad-hoc type organization.

While the rebel counter-state was solidifying its organizational hierarchies, problems with Gage's hierarchy resulted in a deteriorating organization. This is evidenced in the absence of the Commander of the North America Royal Navy, Admiral Graves, at the war council of 17 June. Gage's inner circle of advisors did not bring a naval perspective into consideration, a perspective that could have resulted in a radically different ending to the battle. Had Gage included Graves in the war council, a naval bombardment of Breed's Hill would have surely been a recommendation, given that Grave's ships provided bombardment support for the landing army forces.¹⁰⁶ In addition, had this bombardment occurred, the rebels would have had to withdraw from the hill and the Charlestown peninsula. In this scenario, the battle would have been a total victory, as opposed to a pyrrhic one.

If Gage's strategy to consolidate highlighted internal problems, then Gage's strategy to mobilize the Indians certainly highlighted external problems. Though the Indians were able to achieve relatively substantial victories for the Crown like those in the beginning phases of the siege at Fort St. Jean and in other events recognized by Gage, the failures to maximize their friendship can be attributed to the mismanagements of the British government.¹⁰⁷ The clear lack of authority and direction for Gage, the internal structural disarray of the administrative arm due to political patronage, and the general feeling of security proved to be major hindrances to Gage's command.¹⁰⁸

Gage employed these four distinct strategies designed to deny rebel political expression, disarm the rebels, and consolidate British forces in order to be prepared for

¹⁰⁵ Burnett, *The Continental Congress*, Chapter 6 & 7.

¹⁰⁶ French, *First Year of the American Revolution*, 220.

¹⁰⁷ French, *The First Year of the American Revolution*, 407.

¹⁰⁸ For the most comprehensive study on the failures of the British government, see Piers Mackesy, *The War for America, 1775–1783* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

conflict and mobilize support. The results of the interaction of these strategies with that of the rebels' strategies was perhaps most clear to the next commander. Gage's replacement would now have to deal with the more effective rebel political and military organizations, whose actions more effectively garnered societal support via refined propaganda networks that greatly influenced the population's *effective* preferences.

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IV. GENERAL HOWE CHRONICLES

“In the course of the great variety of business which fell to my lot, during such a wide and extensive command, faults must undoubtedly be perceived, but none I hope which can be suspected to have arisen from want or zeal, or from inactivity”

—General Howe, *Postwar testimony to the House of Commons*,
April 29, 1779.¹⁰⁹

A. GAGE OUT, HOWE IN

General William Howe’s military career was marked by courage and competence, which explained his favorable standing within the ministry of King George III. A veteran of the Siege of Louisburg in 1758, Howe won commendations for his actions during the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, a pivotal battle in the Seven Years’ War.¹¹⁰ After defending the battle’s prize, Quebec, Howe commanded an infantry battalion and according to his commanding officer, Jeffrey Amherst, it was “the best trained in all America.”¹¹¹

Howe’s political career, though backed by distinguished family connections was less favorable. As his political career progressed, he was elected to Parliament where he represented Nottingham and served as a member of the Whig Party. During his time in government, Howe’s sympathy for America manifested in his open opposition to Britain’s colonial economic policy. Such basis originated from his time spent in America, the relationships built, and the experiences shared with such entities as the militia and different governing bodies. Though Howe was sympathetic towards the colonists, the lucrative offer of Commander in America could not be passed up.¹¹²

Despite his distinguished military reputation and outspoken political career, Howe was not without two notable flaws. First, it had always been a challenge for him to

¹⁰⁹ William Howe, “The Narrative of Lieut. Gen Sir William Howe in a Committee of the House of Commons,” (London: H. Baldwin, April 29, 1779) 2.

¹¹⁰ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 353–354.

¹¹¹ Christopher Hibbert, *Redcoats and Rebels* (London: Norton & Company Inc., 1990), 43.

¹¹² Mackesy, *The War for America*, 74.

develop a coherent argument in the House of Commons, a problem that may not have only affected his political life, but also his military career vis-à-vis his communications skills with subordinates and superiors.¹¹³ Howe's second notable flaw was his "overreaching sense of superiority," concerning his opponents, perhaps even his subordinates.¹¹⁴

Despite his flaws, Howe was placed in command effective 12 October 1775. In the natural course of progression, General Carleton in Canada should have succeeded to command. However, the ministry reverted back to the command structure of 1759 due to no land connectivity between Quebec and Boston. The 1759 plan called for distinct commands in each Canada and the colonies. Howe now commanded everything from Nova Scotia to West Florida.¹¹⁵

Howe ascended to command at a time when the British Army was at its most deplorable state as it was pent up in Boston. Lack of access to local supplies and an immobile army in Boston compelled the British Ministry to send an evacuation message. Included in this message were orders for Howe to move his force to New York.¹¹⁶ The untimely arrival of transport ships prevented the move prior to the onset of winter.

Besieged all winter at Boston, Howe looked to the spring of 1776 to implement his Hudson River Campaign, but the Continental Army had other thoughts. This plan called for a combined offensive from Canada and New York, where Howe would land his forces, to strike up the Hudson River separating the New England colonies from the middle colonies. Unfortunately, General George Washington's desire to strike at the besieged British Army manifested in the fortifying of Dorchester Heights, with the captured cannons from Fort Ticonderoga, on 5 March 1776. Though just far enough not to be highly accurate, the cannons still proved a threat and Howe planned to attack them. Days of uncooperative weather pre-empted the attack and he reconsidered the action.

¹¹³ Mackesy, *The War for America*, 75.

¹¹⁴ David McCullough, *1776* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 78.

¹¹⁵ Mackesy, *The War for America*, 40.

¹¹⁶ Mackesy, *The War for America*, 42–56.

Instead, he very swiftly packed up his entire force and set sail on St Patrick's Day. Howe was bound for Halifax because he did not properly load his force in order to meet a possible contested landing in New York.¹¹⁷

In Halifax, Howe still had specific guidance from Parliament in-hand and he continued planning for offensive operations in New York, which was considered a Loyalist stronghold and an essential location from which to separate the rebellious New England colonies.¹¹⁸ While preparing his forces to move, Howe stated that he, "thought a decisive victory over the Continental Army the shortest, if not the only, way to peace."¹¹⁹

B. ONE DECISIVE BLOW[UP]

1. Howe Targets the Continental Army

Howe and his forces arrived and took, without force, Staten Island throughout July 1776. By the end of July, his 32,000 troops and 400 ships—the largest expeditionary force of the eighteenth century—was encamped on Staten Island.¹²⁰ British morale was high because food was aplenty. General Howe was just as excited, but his happiness stemmed from the welcoming arms of New York's Loyalists.

Quite confident he had the most complete information on the rebels due to his Loyalist support, Howe finalized and implemented his one-decisive-victory plan.¹²¹ The strategy designed to defeat the Continental Army once and for all, and destroy George Washington began on 22 August 1776. On this day 4,000 troops via 90 ships landed at Gravesend on Long Island, just south of the fortified Continental Army position at the Heights of Brooklyn. Over the next five days, Howe positioned his army, which now

¹¹⁷ McCullough, *1776*, 96–105. It is also important to note that General Clinton launched a failed expedition to support two southern colonial Governors from early to mid 1776. The inception of this strategy originated in Parliament and thus will not be discussed here.

¹¹⁸ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 27.

¹¹⁹ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 83.

¹²⁰ McCullough, *1776*, 148. Interesting to note here was that the largest city in America at the time was Philadelphia with a population of 30,000.

¹²¹ McCullough, *1776*, 141.

totaled 20,000 due to continued transports from Staten Island. In a surprise move, Howe marched half of his army through the night, unbeknownst to the Continental Army, from Flat Bush to an eastern town called Jamaica. By the morning of the battle, the Continental Army foolishly believed that they were only about to face 10,000 British troops conducting a frontal attack.¹²²

2. Washington's Failed War of Posts

Through the conduct of proper analysis, accurate rebel intelligence, and the boundary of Loyalist and Whig supporters, George Washington identified New York as Britain's next objective.¹²³ Washington believed that holding New York was crucial to controlling access to the inland waterways as well as securing the colonies. Bolstered by his success at Bunker Hill and determined that holding New York was critical for success; Washington developed a defensive entrenchment strategy to counter the British offensive—termed the War of Posts by Historian Robert Middlekauff.¹²⁴

As British Forces began to transport troops from Staten Island to Gravesend Bay, General Washington fortified Brooklyn Heights for the upcoming battle. Washington divided his army in to two elements—one at Brooklyn and the other at the Heights of Brooklyn—in order to design his defenses in a manner that was to compel Howe into spreading his forces. More importantly, such a design was meant to prevent Howe from being able to apply overwhelming combat power at any one location. Washington however, committed a grave oversight by leaving his left flank unprotected.¹²⁵

Howe's first operation was brilliantly executed. The initial attack consisted of a frontal attack with 10,000 British troops against the 3,000 of Washington's that had been sent out from Brooklyn. The engagement lasted just long enough for Howe's troops to complete the envelopment of the Continental Army's left rear after marching in from Jamaica. The Battle for Brooklyn Heights was a British victory that captured over 1,000

¹²² McCullough, *1776*, 141.

¹²³ Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 9.

¹²⁴ Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763–1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 340.

¹²⁵ Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 348–349.

rebels and trapped another 6,000 rebels in Brooklyn while sustaining minimal casualties.¹²⁶ Following the initial success, Howe elected, against the recommendations from General Clinton, to stop the advancing 20,000 troops from storming the Continental Army's secondary redoubts in Brooklyn. Instead his forces stopped and took time to prepare for siege operations.¹²⁷ That time—48 hours—was all that the defeated Washington and his 6,000-trapped troops needed to conduct a complete withdrawal across the East River back to lower New York Island-Manhattan.

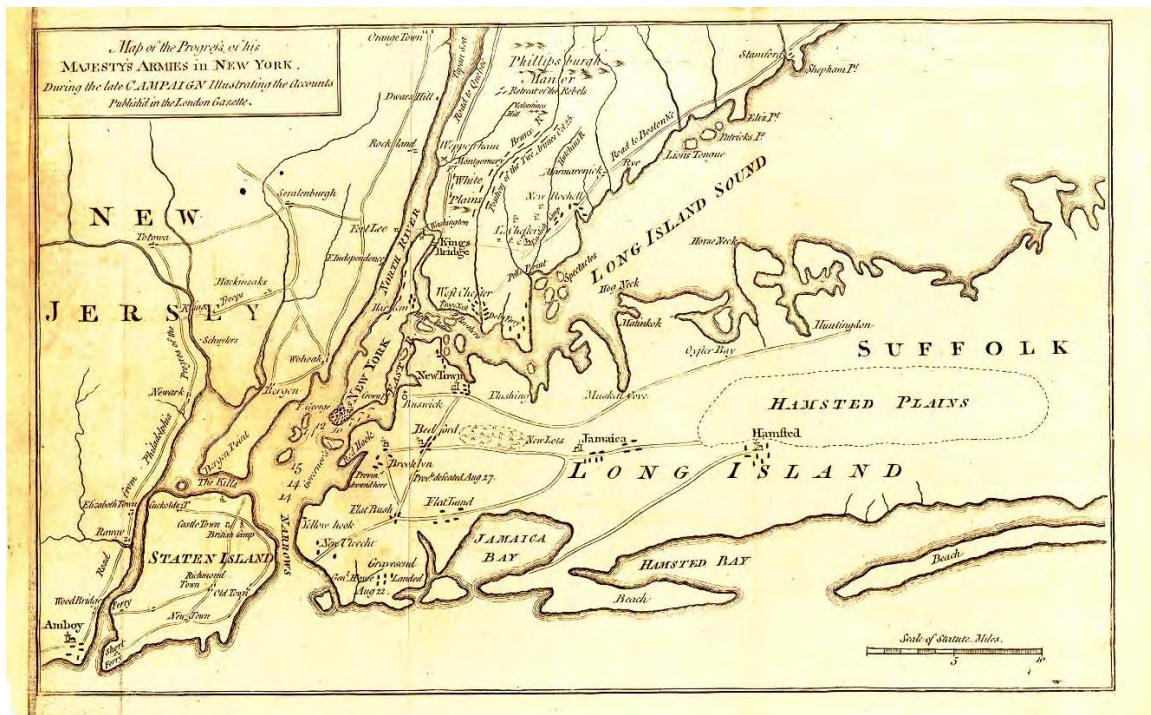


Figure 5. New York-New Jersey Map circa 1776

3. Weakened, the Continental Army Runs

On 2 September 1776, after the withdrawal to lower New York Island, Washington repositioned his dilapidated army. Both Washington and the Continental

¹²⁶ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 110–112.

¹²⁷ David Syrett, *Admiral Lord Howe* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 55.

Congress still desired to defend New York. To achieve this goal, Washington fortified his defensive positions from the Battery to King's Bridge. A lesson gleamed from Bunker Hill.¹²⁸

After taking 15 days to prepare for their next offensive, the British conducted a successful amphibious landing at Kip's Bay on 15 September—the east side of New York Island. In doing so, Howe believed he could force the rebel army to surrender without becoming engaged in a major battle. The operation at Kip's Bay was executed successfully with the British overrunning Washington's thinly spread army. During the operation, Howe chose not to press the offensive west to the Hudson, which would have cutoff the lower portion of Washington's army. Perhaps this was due to overwhelming expressions of joy by the inhabitants of New York Island to the arriving British troops, or to the overly cautious leadership of Howe.¹²⁹ Either way the time allowed Washington to withdraw and consolidate his troops in the north at Harlem Heights, and successfully defend against a hasty British attack a day later.

A victory at Harlem Heights for the Americans on 16 September was enough to cause more caution from Howe, but this time Howe's prudence sent Washington sprinting to the Delaware. Attempting to threaten Washington's lines of communication with New England, Howe conducted yet another amphibious movement to Throg's Neck, a peninsula just south of Pell's Point. Washington sent a small force to delay the extremely slow advance of the British. The two forces met at White Plains on 28 October, and again the British enveloped the flank of the defending Americans. Following the White Plains victory, Howe paused yet again. This pause facilitated Washington's reassessment, which concluded with the decision to maintain garrisons at Fort Washington and Fort Lee while the remainder of the force withdrew to New Jersey.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ McCullough, *1776*, 204–205.

¹²⁹ McCullough, *1776*, 212 and Mackesy, *The War for America*, 90.

¹³⁰ McCullough, *1776*, 229–237.

4. Howe Gives Chase

On 2 November 1776, Howe ordered a full assault on the rebel stronghold at Fort Washington. The British troops again executed a successful operation killing and/or capturing over 3,000 rebels, while sustaining less than 350 casualties.¹³¹ Howe's victory at Fort Washington, and Washington's army turning south instead of north, only further convinced Howe to stay with the strategy to destroy Washington's army.¹³² Rather than to continue to position himself up the Hudson in preparation for the future Hudson River campaigns, Howe chose to pursue the fleeing Continental Army.

Backed by a tide of successive victories and seasonably warm weather, Howe was persuaded to continue his push against the rebel army despite the approaching winter. He ordered his army to move to the Delaware River and was even entertaining the idea of taking Philadelphia before setting up winter camp.¹³³ Though control of Philadelphia never materialized, Howe forced the Continental Army south across the Delaware, just narrowly missing another battle as the Continental Army gathered all boats on the south side, thereby containing the British on the north shore. With this act though, Howe now commanded from Hackensack to Trenton and from Elizabethtown to Long Island as of 26 December 1776.¹³⁴

5. The Strike to the Empire

By late December 1776, it was evident that the Continental Army was in shambles, and in need of a morale boost. Key rebel officers close to Washington understood the army's precarious situation. They recommended immediate action in order to renew faith in the rebel cause. Washington listened to the advice of his officers and initiated planning for offensive operations.¹³⁵ The resulting operation was at Trenton on 26 December 1776 and the effects were tremendous. Within 45 minutes of the raid

¹³¹ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 134.

¹³² Mackesy, *The War for America*, 93.

¹³³ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 149.

¹³⁴ Mackesy, *The War for America*, 97.

¹³⁵ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 153.

starting there were over 100 dead or wounded Hessian soldiers—British mercenaries—and another 1,000 captured. Conversely, the American sustained only four casualties against one of the premier fighting forces in the world, and crossed back into Pennsylvania unmolested and with greater morale.¹³⁶

Washington believed that Howe would retaliate for his loss at Trenton and prepared accordingly. Therefore, he sent a force back into Trenton and awaited the oncoming British force. This second Battle of Trenton resulted in Washington's forces decisively thwarting Cornwallis' assaults. Perhaps taking a page from Howe, Cornwallis paused and consolidated while Washington's force slipped away. Washington, in an effort to deceive the camped forces of Cornwallis, left a very small contingent behind to tend fires and make noises. Under this deception Washington travelled to Princeton. At daybreak, Washington's army and a stay-behind force from Cornwallis' advance to Trenton met for the Battle of Princeton on 3 January 1777. Washington's leadership proved to be overwhelming, as the British chaotically broke and ran to Trenton and New Brunswick. Within days Washington's forces would be camped at Morristown and Howe's holdings significantly diminished.¹³⁷

The losses at Trenton and Princeton compelled Howe to concede a large portion of New Jersey back to the rebels—from Trenton to New Brunswick in the south and Hackensack and Elizabethtown in the north. Even worse, Howe's failure to capitalize on the opportunity of a decisive victory over the rebel army now began to call into question his abilities as the commander of British forces.¹³⁸ Fortunately for Howe, his strategy to wield a big stick against the Continental Army was augmented by his simultaneous offering of 'carrots' to the population of the northeast.

¹³⁶ Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 367.

¹³⁷ Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 367–369.

¹³⁸ William Edward Hartpole Lecky, *The American Revolution, 1763–1783* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1898), 318.

C. THE CARROTS: HOWE TRIES CONCILIATION

1. An Offer They Did Refuse

British Parliament thought that the might of the British military located in their victorious positions on Long Island would weaken the determination of the rebels and compel them to accept the terms of the Howe brothers 11 September 1776 peace commission.¹³⁹ This logic proved false. The reason was that as the British were anchoring on Staten Island in July 1776, the Continental Congress completed the arduous and highly contentious ratification of the Declaration of Independence. In the spring of 1775, members of Congress who advocated for a Declaration of Independence from England were significantly few. Congress recognized that rather than enter a war with England, the majority of Americans wished for reconciliation.

Yet, America's conciliatory hopes faded quickly when Congress, in February 1776, received Britain's Prohibitory Act passed in December 1775. The colonists perceived the Britain's legislation as an act of war in that it called for a blockade—as opposed to quarantine—of all American goods. This perception was solidified when news of Britain's attempts to hire Hessian mercenaries were verified. A few radical Americans, such as Samuel Adams, began in earnest to push Congress in the direction of separating from England. These individual efforts were bolstered when rumors of Britain's peace commissioners never materialized in early 1776. Left to their own devices, the colonies declared their Independence in July, and narrowed the negotiation room between themselves and Britain. On 11 September, the Howe brothers hosted delegates from Congress—Ben Franklin, John Adams and Edward Rutledge—who desired British acceptance of their Independence. The Staten Island Peace Conference was ill fated because, the Howe brothers were empowered to accept nothing less than subservience to British rule. Even more, Parliamentary authorities damned the Howe

¹³⁹ Prior to launching the Long Island assault, Howe did attempt, to no avail, to contact Washington. But the message was left unanswered as the letter was not properly addressed to General Washington. McCullough, *1776*, 144–146.

brothers to failure before the conference even started.¹⁴⁰ Favorably, Parliament did grant enough authority to Howe to facilitate his proffering of a proposal many could not refuse.

2. An Offer They Did Not Refuse

The opinion of Howe, as well as a few leaders in Parliament, was that offering conciliatory measures to the rebels and opportunities for security to the Loyalists, in conjunction with the controlled use of force to apply one decisive blow would be the quickest way to return the colonies to British rule. On 30 November 1776, despite criticism from his closest advisors and during his advance to the Delaware River, Howe issued a proclamation ordering that all armed rebel groups disperse and Congress renounce its powers. He also offered a general pardon to anyone who would present himself to an English official, swear allegiance to the King and no longer partake in armed conflict.¹⁴¹ The pardon persuaded thousands of New York and New Jersey rebels to join the Provincial Corps in support of the Crown.¹⁴²

To mobilize the support of the Loyalist contingent in the recently acquired New Jersey and New York, Howe established cantonment areas. These areas, fortified through a series of posts, provided a location to rally Loyalists and provide them service in the form of civil law under the Crown. A virtual and physical shield to rebel activity, the strength of these posts rested with the presence of the British Army. Initially, the British presence would simultaneously build confidence and provide much needed security. Later, the cantonments would be self-sufficient, which would free up British troops for other tasks.¹⁴³

On 21 April 1777, Howe offered another deal to the rebel colonists. Desiring a superior turnout to that of the November proclamation, particularly in light of the losses of southern New Jersey just months before, Howe offered a plot of land, money and a general pardon to all rebels who agreed to serve a two-year commitment in the Provincial

¹⁴⁰ Burnett, *The Continental Congress*, Chapters 7–10.

¹⁴¹ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 146.

¹⁴² Lecky, *The American Revolution*, 274.

¹⁴³ Mackesy, *The War for America*, 112.

Corps. After a long cold winter and the difficulties of provisioning during the Forage Wars,¹⁴⁴ Howe's most recent attempt brought in "dozens of men each day,"¹⁴⁵ which helped to augment British efforts.¹⁴⁶ At the height of Loyalist turnout, Howe was completing his plans for the campaign of 1777.

D. CLEAR—BUILD—OH, MERDE!

1. Howe: Army New York to Rebel Capital—Philadelphia

By mid-1777, General Howe finalized and began his new campaign plan that called for the capture of Philadelphia.¹⁴⁷ Howe realized that if he could not decisively defeat Washington's army he must strike directly at the epicenter of the rebel political infrastructure, a location Washington was sure to protect. Howe believed that once he entered Philadelphia, Loyalists would turn out in droves in support of the British, and the middle colonies would move freely to the Crown.¹⁴⁸ With Philadelphia liberated and Washington on the verge of collapse, or at least distracted, Howe confidently believed that General Burgoyne's—a British Commander in Quebec—expedition down the Hudson would succeed.¹⁴⁹ To ensure Burgoyne's success, Howe, prior to leaving on 9 July 1777, directed General Clinton—Howe's stay behind commander in New York—to act prudently to support Burgoyne's advance by *only* threatening the lower Hudson rebel posts—no order from the War Secretary ever was sent to Howe directing support.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, Howe delayed his departure until he heard word of Burgoyne's success at Ticonderoga on 6 July. With the good news in hand, Howe and 18,000 troops made their

¹⁴⁴ The Forage Wars were an undetermined amount of skirmishes between British forage parties and American partisans. According to David Hackett Fischer the toll on the British effort was more devastating than the Battles of Trenton and Princeton, David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 418.

¹⁴⁵ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 205.

¹⁴⁶ The Provincial Corps was a military unit developed by the British and fleshed out with Loyalists. Their primary capability was that of light infantry. For a concise read on the Corps, Philip Katcher, *The American Provincial Corps, 1775–1784* (Oxford: Osprey, 1873).

¹⁴⁷ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 183.

¹⁴⁸ Lecky, *The American Revolution*, 318.

¹⁴⁹ John F. Reed, *Campaign to Valley Forge* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965), 19.

¹⁵⁰ Mackesy, *The War for America*, 144.

way aboard a 147-ship British armada and set sail for their landing site on the Delaware River.¹⁵¹ On July 30, General Howe summoned his senior officers to his ship to inform them that he had decided to change the infiltration site from the Delaware River to the Chesapeake River. Howe's decision was based largely on false intelligence provided by his spies and intelligence operatives, regarding the location of the American army.¹⁵² In his typical sluggish fashion, Howe landed on 25 August near Elkton, Maryland on Elks River.



Figure 6. New Jersey-Pennsylvania-Maryland Map circa 1777

¹⁵¹ Reed, *Campaign to Valley Forge*, 20–21

¹⁵² Syrett, *Admiral Lord Howe*, 68.

2. Washington Attempts to Check British Army

Washington watched the events of 1777 unfold closely. When General Howe chose to move on Philadelphia rather than link up with Burgoyne, Washington mobilized his army in New Jersey and began to push south towards Pennsylvania. He positioned his army northeast of Philadelphia and west of Bristol along the Neshaminy Creek, and awaited Howe, whose location was now in the Delaware Capes according to rebel intelligence. But as Howe sailed out of the Capes, the rebel intelligence network went dry, which forced Washington with the decision; either he march north to support General Gates or move south to Charlestown. Fortunately, for the marching troops, Howe was spotted in the Chesapeake.¹⁵³ At once Washington moved his troops from Neshaminy to battle positions southwest of Wilmington on the Christiana Creek. However, Howe did not accept the offer of battle and moved north, avoiding Washington's army, to the Brandywine River. Washington responded to Howe's maneuver by setting a defense at Chad's Ford on the Brandywine River, effectively blocking access to Philadelphia. It was here that Howe's 16,500 men, feeling confident, confronted Washington's 11,000 men.¹⁵⁴

The attack commenced on 11 September when Howe's army moved against Washington for the Battle of Brandywine Creek. The tactically superior Howe decisively flanked and turned Washington's northern defenses. Washington's hopes to protect Philadelphia melted, as did his defenses. The results were devastating and the 1,300-casualty stricken rebel army began a long retreat, which included a march through the recently abandoned rebel political capital.¹⁵⁵

3. Congress on the Lam; Hears News from Afar

The details of the rebel loss at Brandywine did not reach Congress at its home in Philadelphia, but instead at its makeshift location in Lancaster. On 18 September

¹⁵³ Reed, *Campaign to Valley Forge*, 59.

¹⁵⁴ Ferling, *Setting The World Abaze*, 174.

¹⁵⁵ For the results to the battle; Reed, *Campaign to Valley Forge*, 140, and for the maneuvers during the retreat; Reed, *Campaign to Valley Forge*, Chapter IX.

Congress, fearful of the advancing British, departed the city and headed fifty miles west to the pre-arranged meeting location, and nine-day home of the Continental Congress, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.¹⁵⁶ Convening only momentarily to receive battle updates from the military describing the events at Brandywine Creek and of Howe's decision not to join forces with Burgoyne, the Congress moved to York, where news from afar arrived.

In York, the Congress heard of good news and finalized the perpetual union. General Burgoyne's Hudson River expedition, just two months after his victory at Ticonderoga, was dealt a serious blow. The excruciatingly slow logistical supply lines—resultant from Burgoyne's poor supply planning—slowed his effort and allowed the rebel army commanded by General Gates to prepare for the coming conflict.¹⁵⁷ Though Burgoyne took the field of battle in the first Saratoga Battle, it came at a cost. News of 600 British casualties versus half of that for the rebels was certainly welcomed news in Congress. Even more enthusiasm would result from Congress's completion of the document that became the thirteen-state de facto government system. In November, the Articles of Confederation not only provided legitimacy of the rebel government, but also paved the way for further colonial cooperation.¹⁵⁸ Between these enthusiastic events, the news of Philadelphia arrived.

4. Howe Takes Philadelphia, and All Its Problems

After nearly three weeks of skillful maneuver and counter-maneuvers, Washington was out positioned and left an open door to the biggest city in America, Philadelphia. With little resistance, Howe's forces entered to a few thousand cheering Loyalists.¹⁵⁹ The outpouring of Loyalists turned to Howe for help in emplacing civil government. Howe's response was to create a "pseudo-civilian government for the surrendered city."¹⁶⁰ Though positions were created and manned, portions of the army

¹⁵⁶ Ferling, *Setting The World Abaze*, 173 and 179.

¹⁵⁷ Richard M. Ketchum, *Saratoga* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997), 244.

¹⁵⁸ Burnett, *The Continental Congress*, Chapter 13.

¹⁵⁹ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 241, and Mackesy, *The War for America*, 129.

¹⁶⁰ Reed, *Campaign to Valley Forge*, 190.

conducted much of the governing. As Howe was building necessary institutions for the Loyalists in Philadelphia, security was becoming a problem.

Inside Philadelphia, the civil government was progressing, but outside was another matter. In a Trenton-like plan, Washington attacked the British garrison at Germantown, a location just seven miles from Philadelphia. The 4 October battle resulted in Washington's retreat. Thought not to be the tactical victory that Trenton was, Germantown was at least worth its weight concerning strategic signaling. Although General Washington lost the Battle of Germantown, he received high praise from France and compelled them ever closer to entering the war overtly.¹⁶¹

His successful defense of Germantown, must have given Howe the confidence to decide on one last decisive engagement with Washington before the end of the year. On 4 December Howe ventured out towards Washington's forces in White Marsh in order to lock horns in battle. But after several days of skirmishes and failed efforts to find the flank of Washington's army, Howe decided to return to camp. Upon his return came career-ending news.¹⁶²

5. Saratoga's Pivotal Results Prompts a Bid *Adieux*

As Howe pulled his forces back into Philadelphia, and Washington directed his to Valley Forge, the news of the second Battle of Saratoga arrived. Shockingly Burgoyne's army had surrendered to the rebels on 17 October 1777. The causes for this calamity were a lack of provisions, low troop strength, and the absence of assistance from some type of relief force. The traumatic blow left Britain without over 5,500 troops.¹⁶³

The reactions to the British surrender at Saratoga were worlds apart. Howe would pen his resignation before the years ends—perhaps to preempt Parliamentary inquiries or maybe to display his anger with them.¹⁶⁴ Washington, on the other hand, surely knew

¹⁶¹ George Otto Trevelyan, *The American Revolution*, Vol. IV (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1920), 249.

¹⁶² For concise information on the White Marsh Battle; Reed, *Campaign to Valley Forge*, Chapter 26.

¹⁶³ Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 390–391.

¹⁶⁴ Mackesy, *The War for America*, 149–151.

that news of this victory would be of service to the emissaries in France attempting to negotiate for a treaty, but kept at the task at hand and continued to ready his army through the eventless winter of 1777–1778.¹⁶⁵

E. HOWE OUT, FRENCH IN

In February 1778, the French entered into an alliance with the colonial rebels. The Treaty of Alliance was signed for two reasons. The first, rumors of British secret negotiations for peace with the rebels were abound, which spelled continued inferiority to the French.¹⁶⁶ Second, the losses at Saratoga were too monumental a defeat for the French and they now decided to openly exploit the island empire's weaknesses.

The 1778 Treaty of Alliance meant that Spain was sure to enter the war as well, which meant that England no longer enjoyed undisputed command of the sea and needed to reassess her foreign policy. The combined power of the Bourbons in 1779, after Spain officially entered, threatened the vast sea-based empire of England. But even before Spain joined the war overtly, England's vulnerabilities to the French Navy compelled Parliament to consolidate on that which was most important, the West Indies.¹⁶⁷ England's new plan was to defend their holdings in North America with smaller numbers of troops than available, and conduct a strategic shift to defend their Caribbean interests.¹⁶⁸ But was this strategic shift preventable or had Howe's professed faults opened the door to a world war?

Howe's first strategy, which aimed at dealing one decisive blow to the Continental Army, devastated the counter-state, elated the state, and piqued the interest of the international community. Though the rebel victories in New Jersey renewed the hopes of some of the radical leaders, the dilapidated army was decreasing in size and in morale. After their arrival to Morristown for the winter of 1776–1777, the ranks were

¹⁶⁵ Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 417–426.

¹⁶⁶ Mackesy, *The War for America*, 160–161.

¹⁶⁷ Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 414.

¹⁶⁸ Mackesy, *The War for America*, 186.

depleted by deserters and by March 1777 the army numbered less than 3,000.¹⁶⁹ Observing the problem with desertion and recruitment, the Continental Congress not only passed recruiting legislation in May, but also strengthened future recruitment with the legislation of the eighty-eight-battalion resolve.¹⁷⁰ But these prompt responses to the Continental Army drastically slowed in December when Congress left its seat in Philadelphia for Baltimore in order to avoid the advancing Howe.¹⁷¹

Not only was business between the army and Congress slow, but also army operations suffered as a result of defeats and low recruiting levels. Washington now understood that he could not defeat the British by relying solely on defensive operations from fixed locations. Instead, through the process of reassessment he was led to employ what is known as the Fabian strategy. Historian Russell Weigley concisely describes the essence of this strategy stating it is, “the erosion of the enemy’s strength by means of hit-and-run strikes against his outposts.”¹⁷² The strategy fundamentally lengthened the war for the British, and any future attempt to draw in Washington’s Continental Army to a pitched battle would prove futile wrecked.

Regardless of the Continental Army’s weakened state, the counter-state did have one productive force, the New England militias. And it operated with impunity. Howe’s over-focus on the Continental Army left the militia to their own devices, which meant that Loyalists in militia territory were terrorized or coerced into submission.¹⁷³

In January 1777, the British Parliament could have not been more excited, and that excitement took only a small hit upon hearing the news of the losses at Trenton and Princeton. During the campaign of 1776, the English people viewed General Howe as the unstoppable British General who was crushing the American rebellion.¹⁷⁴ On 8

¹⁶⁹ Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 371–372.

¹⁷⁰ Burnett, *The Continental Congress*, 164, and Robert K. Wright Jr., *The Continental Army* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 92.

¹⁷¹ Wright Jr., *The Continental Army*, 99.

¹⁷² Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 3.

¹⁷³ Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence*, 27.

¹⁷⁴ Troy O. Bickham, *Making Headlines: The American Revolution as seen through the British Press* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), 93.

December 1776, General William Howe was notified that the King of England had knighted him for his impressive victories at New York.¹⁷⁵ The common belief amongst British leadership was that George Washington's army would not be an effective fighting force for much longer.¹⁷⁶ Upon receipt of the news of the end of the year defeats, some leaders and Ministry members believed the defeats to be minor.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, the leaders in Parliament took pride in their momentous accomplishment of fielding the largest expeditionary force of the eighteenth century, and went back to planning dutifully.¹⁷⁸

As 1775 came to a close, both the rebel colonies and Britain were looking for international assistance. Washington's success at Trenton and Princeton motivated France to increase covert material support to the rebels.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, France now had military advisors operating alongside the Americans and was providing Washington's army with cannons and weapons.¹⁸⁰ Despite concerted attempts by American emissaries, Spain only "adjusted its policy to a semi-covert system of simultaneously checking and resisting British expansion..."¹⁸¹

Britain's international fortunes were less invigorating than that of the Americans. Britain, on one hand, found diplomatic stonewalls in Catherine, the Tsarina of Russia. Wanting nothing to do with internal rebellions, Catherine chose not to support the British with their colonial problem.¹⁸² On the other hand, Prussian mercenaries were overly eager to wage Britain's war in the colonies. But by increasing British combat power, the

¹⁷⁵ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 151.

¹⁷⁶ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 115.

¹⁷⁷ McCullough, *1776*, 290.

¹⁷⁸ Mackesy, *The War for America*, 102–105.

¹⁷⁹ Syrett, *Admiral Lord Howe*, 66.

¹⁸⁰ Mackesy, *The War for America*, 128.

¹⁸¹ Thomas Chavez, *Spain and the Independence of the United States: An Intrinsic Gift* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 33.

¹⁸² Mackesy, *The War for America*, 61.

mercenary presence also fueled anti-Crown sentiment, particularly among those that just returned from Howe's failed peace mission.¹⁸³

Simultaneous to his first strategy, Howe implemented his second strategy of conciliation. This strategy met with mixed reviews from within the state, as well as the colonial population. As the campaign of 1777 approached, the politicians of Whitehall began to question the ability of Howe to complete the mission decisively. In the spring of 1777, the North Ministry received the results of an inquiry into the effectiveness of the conciliation strategy. The findings of the inquiry demonstrated that Howe's strategy was ineffective in creating substantial long-term results. Furthermore, many Parliamentary leaders in England were getting tired of Howe's pardons, as the growing sentiment was one of retribution, not conciliation.¹⁸⁴ England was so determined to force Howe to give up his conciliation effort and end the rebellion, militarily, as soon as possible that Parliament, once a staunch supporter of Howe, had chosen to provoke the resignation of Howe in August 1777.¹⁸⁵ It had become clear that many British political leaders had lost confidence in General Howe's conciliation efforts and questioned his ability to transition to a more aggressive strategy.

Even with the growing discontent in England, the army in the colonies was growing stronger, but to no effect. The growth of the Provincial Corps exceeded official expectation in 1776 and recruitment increased annually until 1780.¹⁸⁶ However, the Provincial Corps never really lifted off, and was not actively promoted or employed until the defeats of Saratoga because of a lack of faith in the capabilities of the ranks of the unit.¹⁸⁷

The perceptions of the population, based on observing the events of conciliation, were varied. To the portion of the population that were inclined to support the rebels, Howe's conciliation measures, particularly pardons, certainly looked attractive,

¹⁸³ Mackesy, *The War for America*, 72.

¹⁸⁴ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 210.

¹⁸⁵ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 222–223.

¹⁸⁶ Paul H. Smith, *Loyalist and Redcoats* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 77.

¹⁸⁷ Daniel Marston, *The American Revolution, 1774–1783* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), 14.

especially since the rebel army had been chased out of New York very rapidly. To the hard-core supporters, beliefs were certainly tested, particularly if you lived in the New York area. Similarly, within the Loyalist population, perceptions varied. The slow rate that information travelled throughout the colonies and the rare chance an individual had of actually recouping lost estates, dissuaded many would-be Loyalists from risking the trip to British lines.¹⁸⁸ Also, those that did take advantage of the conciliation prior to Howe withdrawing to New Brunswick were now left abandoned or forced to relocate, which helped to splinter Loyalist confidence. The portion of the population that was politically neutral traded one army for another. The times of relative anarchy under the Continental Army were traded for the times of inconsideration under the British Army.¹⁸⁹ To this, Howe attempted to appease the people of New York by ordering his men to protect the colonists and their property and to arrest and execute any soldier caught looting or committing additional acts; but these were ultimately just words at least in a majority of perceptions already being solidified.¹⁹⁰

In the summer of 1777, Howe unveiled his third and final strategy of clear and build Philadelphia. This strategy resulted in the dispirited population of Philadelphia, and a stupefied Parliament. The dispirited population was a result of the lack of discipline and over indulgence of British troops while stationed in Pennsylvania, and their disinterested commander. The Loyalists grew tired of an undisciplined army that took advantage of their position relative to the regular resident. And a lack of heavy-handed responses from Howe further enraged townsmen.¹⁹¹ But Howe's thoughts were somewhere else. While Howe attempted to build civil institutions, the population of Philadelphia's voices became too much for Howe to tolerate. The intolerance was fueled not because Howe did not want to grow Loyalist support, but because George Washington's army was his focus, and his belief that civil government should have been

¹⁸⁸ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 149.

¹⁸⁹ For Continental Army transgressions against New Yorkers: Henry Phelps Johnston, *The Campaign of 1776 Around New York and Brooklyn* (Brooklyn: Long Island Historical Society, 1878), 80 and for British Army transgressions: Oscar T. Barck Jr., *New York City During the War for Independence* (New York, 1931), Chapter 3.

¹⁹⁰ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 92.

¹⁹¹ Trevelyan, *The American Revolution*, 277.

an easy transition for a Loyalist only governing body.¹⁹² Like the population, others, across the big pond, had reason to be unhappy with Howe.

The Loyalist population complained because they perceived that they were second to Washington, but Parliament could not complain at all because they were perceptionless. The Ministry's biggest complaint—voiced on multiple occasions—was that Howe failed to inform Parliament. On more than one occasion, Howe went 30 days without marking paper to Parliament.¹⁹³ These actions were not what Whitehall required, and went a ways in explaining the acceptance of Howe's resignation.

In the beginning of 1778, Parliament, with notions of Howe's persistent conciliation strategy against the wishes of British leaders and coupled with the frustration due to the lack of information, accepted Howe's resignation. In the same moment, Parliament placed Clinton in command of the colonies. His task was to hold the line in the colonies and at the same time expect diminishing resources so that Britain's new global war initiatives could be handled. The possibility of this task is outside the scope of this work, but Howe had left Clinton with an assortment of problems. First, a large portion of the Loyalists in Philadelphia, New York, and New Jersey were now discontent and inactive. This action provided the radicals with an excellent opportunity to target the area with propaganda in hopes of swaying or coercing the Loyalist population. Secondly, Clinton faced a recently rejuvenated Continental Army that was controlled by a highly organized Congress. Lastly, there was a disgruntled and divisive Parliament that he needed to answer to.

¹⁹² Reed, *Campaign to Valley Forge*, 190.

¹⁹³ Mackesy, *The War for America*, 150–151.

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V. FAULTS OF THE GENERALS

“It is impossible to see even what I have seen of this magnificent country and not go nearly mad at the long train of misconducts and mischances by which we have lost it.”

—William Eden, Carlisle Commission, 1778¹⁹⁴

A. DYNAMIC SHIFT

In early 1778, General Howe received news of France’s entrance into the war on behalf of the Americans. The event was momentous signifying the onset of a worldwide conflict amongst the great nations of Europe. Furthermore, it placed the British Empire in a vulnerable position that required her to expend vast resources and treasure in an attempt to protect her global assets. Fortunately for Howe, he returned to England soon after the news broke. Yet, the overt decision of France and then Spain to enter into the fight would not have occurred had the British Generals, like Howe, not sustained significant military defeats, like the defeats at Trenton and Saratoga.¹⁹⁵

As the dynamics surrounding the contest in America changed it is important to understand that both General Howe and Gage cannot be *solely* blamed for losing control of the colonies. Specifically, they are not accountable for an ambiguous and disjointed over-arching policy,¹⁹⁶ and constrained resources.¹⁹⁷ The reason why is neither officer possessed the capability to meaningfully affect these factors and therefore must be absolved of that specific guilt.

¹⁹⁴ John R. Alden, *A History of the American Revolution* (New York: De Capo Press, 1969), 387.

¹⁹⁵ Officially, Spain never entered into a formal treaty with the Continental Congress to assist in the rebel war efforts against the British. It did provide a significant amount of covert support to the rebels as evidenced in Chavez, *Spain and the Independence of the United States*. In 1779, Spain joined France in the war through the Treaty of Aranjuez.

¹⁹⁶ For an argument that identifies that the British lacked a single over-arching policy, which in turn caused their failure: Eric Robson, *The American Revolution in its Political and Military Aspects* (London: De Capo Press, 1955), 151.

¹⁹⁷ For an argument that identifies the dilapidated state of the British military organization and how problems with recruiting and logistics and unclear structure of authority affected success in the War for America: E. E. Curtis, *Organization of the British Army in the American Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927).

However, the Generals can be held accountable for their actions and ideas concerning the translation of British policy into effective strategy. After a careful analysis of the strategies developed and implemented by each General Officer three questions naturally arose when considering their culpability. First, what was the degree to which each of the different strategies assisted the Crown in achievement of their overarching goal? Second and most important, what were the mindsets and conditions that prompted the Generals to make such decisions? Last, what prescriptions were available that would have allowed the different strategies to function as intended? With these questions in mind we move forward to determine the faults of the Generals.

B. ONE STEP BEHIND: UNDERESTIMATION

The first strategy employed by Gage was political decapitation. The essence of this strategy was to ensure that political appeasement and realignment occurred between the colonial institutions and the Crown. The supporting strategy was to apprehend the radicals using the existing judicial and political entities.¹⁹⁸ Expected was that the General Court would oversee the arrest of the radical leaders, thus separating them from the population. To achieve this effect required that certain conditions be met.

The reality was that not all conditions were present for successful implementation. Even more, those absent quickly overshadowed the conditions that were present. On hand was an intelligence network that provided Gage with the information to target the radical leaders. As for separating the radicals, he could have used two tools either the military or the existing colonial institutions. Gage opted to use the latter to maintain perceptions of legitimacy in the eyes of the population. Evidence of this is his proclamation that called for the arrest of rebel leaders to be prosecuted by the colonial judicial institutions. Yet, missing was a unified predisposition within the institution to obey the Crown.

Gage was one step behind the astute radical leaders when he selected to use the existing apparatus to apprehend the radicals, a decision with harsh ramifications. He did

¹⁹⁸ The idea of supporting/supported strategies within the McCormick Diamond model was discussed: Gordon McCormick, interview by Kristoffer Barriteau, David W. Gunther and Clifton J. Lopez, *British Strategy*, (October 25, 2011).

not understand that the existing judicial and political institutions were incapable of handling his assigned task, due in large part to fractionalization resultant from keen radical leaders. Gage underestimated the pervasive anti-Crown sentiment coursing through the veins of the colonists that was generated by a few astute radical leaders. Though on one hand he did profess to know and subsequently requested 20,000 troops to restore relations forcefully, but in matter of execution, he sidelined his only apparatus from which he could have removed those catalysts leaders, and then entrusted the very institutions pervaded by radicals to bring the radicals to justice. These results were catastrophic. He simultaneously provided time, space and a coalescing oppression via proffered words to radicals. His 13 years of experience should have better guided his actions...for this fault he cannot be absolved.

To attain success in radical targeting, Gage needed to employ his military forces, in unison with the colonial institutions, to secure those persons wanted by the state. The military was the only entity capable of compressing the time and space needed by the radical organization for continued growth. The importance of influential leaders has been proven throughout time—even for Gage’s time—and must consume the time and efforts of those positioned against them.

C. UNINTENDED MESSAGES AND OVER-FOCUS: PERCEPTION MISMANAGEMENT

After the failure of radical targeting, Gage transitioned to an approach that attempted to disarm the rebels. This strategy intended to prevent conflict by removing critical, yet limited resources from the battle space. Resources that were, predominantly, located in the various colonial militia stores. Nevertheless, prior to embarking on this particular course Gage needed to comprehend and ensure the presence of certain situational factors.

The execution of the disarmament strategy needed to be conditions-based for its successful achievement. Present was information on the geographical location of the

targeted resources. Moreover, there existed a legitimate action arm, the military, which could execute the plan. Unfortunately for Gage, he failed to realize that a critical condition was missing.

Absent was a proper understanding of how the population would react and how it would affect Gage's course of action. His failure to understand the population resulted in the transmission of the unintended message that the Brits are attacking what colonist's value. The actual message—seizing the radical's ability to make war—was internally translated into the unintended message because of the absence of other information from the military commander. His failure to foreshadow or anticipate the people's reaction was a terrible mistake. Colonial inhabitants felt that their liberties, specifically the right to defend themselves, were being attacked. This sentiment coupled with radical propaganda proved most catastrophic and created a general sentiment of armed resistance. These negative popular responses compelled Gage to throttle back his strategy—a strategy that was hurting the radicals. For these two conceptual faults Gage cannot be absolved.

In spite of the damage caused by disarmament, this tactic was the first to actually harm the rebel organization because it attacked their major weakness. What Gage needed to do in order for this strategy to succeed required the simultaneous implementation of two actions. The first was to continue to press forward with his use of the military in seizing militia stores. Second, was to shroud this decision with an information campaign that employed the existing social media tools to manage popular perceptions. Acting as prescribed here could have mitigated the population's anxiety and severely diminished the rebel's infectious recruiting.

Howe's strategy, manifesting in the campaign of Philadelphia, failed for the same reason Gage's anti-powder strategy did. Howe's last strategy was designed to strike at the legitimacy of the rebel organization. By targeting Philadelphia he would signify to the rebels and the world that Britain was the only legitimate colonial authority. In trying to accomplish this Howe moved his forces to Pennsylvania, cleared Philadelphia of the Continental Army, and held the area. But like past efforts this plan would not succeed.

In this strategy, all required conditions for success were present, but Howe's over-focus on Washington taxed the support of the Loyalist. Specifically, Howe's fixation prevented needed attention to the population. The time to build civil government never manifested and was constantly a point of contention between Howe and the Loyalists in Pennsylvania. Furthermore, his fascination caused him to mismanage his army. Howe's soft hand in disciplinary matters created conditions that facilitated plundering and treating of the population as second-class citizens. These actions facilitated divergent popular support for the Crown and the situation was never dealt with because Howe was always looking at Washington.

Howe's mistake was over-focusing his efforts on destroying the Continental Army. Conceptually, Howe chose the right paradigm to achieve his end state, but in execution his over focus resulted in a disenfranchised population. Howe never placed the required emphasis on managing the population, let alone their expectations. The results were counter-productive to Howe's campaign. Desiring increased legitimacy and support for the Crown, Howe effectively decreased the Loyalist element in Pennsylvania by not fostering positive perceptions among the locals. Howe's perception mismanagement cannot be forgiven, particularly in light of his goal to decrease legitimacy, or in other words to increase the legitimacy of the Crown.

To correct his error, Howe simply needed to place a greater amount of emphasis on establishing positive perceptions. He did not have to give up the hope of destroying Washington's army in one decisive victory, but he did need to relinquish the idea of executing such an action at the soonest possible moment. If Howe had realized the early successes achieved in regards to supporting the population in both New York and New Jersey he could have employed such tactics in the Pennsylvania area.

D. LATERAL AND HIERARCHICAL PROBLEMS: EXPECTATION MISMANAGEMENT

The final strategy Gage sought to employ during his command was the building of alliances with the indigenous peoples of America. In summary, this plan called for the

mobilization of the Indians in support of British war efforts against the rebels. This action aimed to bolster the mechanism by which the state could effectively control the population.

Successful employment of the Indians relied on one predominant condition that was never present—cooperation with other geographical commanders. The British Commander in Canada, Guy Carleton, never employed the Indians properly because of trust issues. Carleton believed the colonists, especially those situated along the western frontier, considered the Indians to be evil and savage. However, the addition of 13,000 soldiers, without question, could have bolstered British efforts. And Gage who never made cooperation, or at least direct and adamant communication, with Carleton a priority suffered the want of 13,000 supporters.

The fault of Gage resided in his inability to articulate the need of this force and its effect on achieving the overarching objective to his colleagues, or at least to the War Department who would then compel Carleton to employ the Indians. Ironically, the employment of the Indians was a no-win situation for Gage because it would have fueled the already pervasive fear of Indians and further coalesced the colonists, but this event did highlight internal problems that Gage never managed. Internal lateral communications were rarely, if ever conducted, between Gage and Carleton. But, because the strategy may have ultimately hurt the Crown's effort in America, this fault of Gage can be absolved only initially.

Yet, Gage possessed the tools to correct his errors. The prescription for this strategy was increased lateral communication with General Officers, Carleton in this instance. Such communication needed to be direct and forthcoming to ensure there was no misconception behind what was required. Additionally, Gage needed to inform the population of why such a decision was made. The idea of open and direct communication between the British and the population always seemed to be forgotten by Gage.

Howe's second strategy—conciliation—failed for the same reason as Gage's Indian strategy did. The essence of Howe's strategy is best captured in his own words.

Howe himself states, “My principal object in so great an extension of the cantonments was to afford protection to the inhabitants, that they might experience the difference between His Majesty’s government, and that to which they were subjected from the rebel leaders.”¹⁹⁹ In trying to reacquire and/or retain the support of the population, Howe endorsed two separate, but supporting actions. To the rebels, he offered conciliatory measures centered upon pardons. As for the Loyalists, he provided them with employment opportunities as soldiers in the Provincial Corps.

The strategy of conciliation possessed the necessary pre-existing conditions for successful implementation. But unlike the previous strategies such conditions were only initially present. At the outset, Howe properly employed and arrayed the army in order to support the plan. His cantonment areas were developed and supported by Loyalists and the Provincial Corps. It was a flawless plan in the process of flawless execution—at least internally.

Howe had failed to include the most important audience in his plan—Parliament. As conciliation progressed Howe failed to continue to articulate to Parliament the successes he was achieving in New Jersey and New York via the Provincial Corps, pardons, and the army. A lack of proper communication on the effects being achieved on the ground resulted in a frustrated Parliament, and even moved them to preempt future conciliation strategies. Provided the incoherent policies, Howe’s calamitous fault only worsened the strategic situation, for which a Member of Parliament *himself* cannot be forgiven.

The prescriptions necessary for correcting such errors and allowing conciliation to succeed were not overly complicated. Howe needed to more adequately articulate the effects of this supporting strategy to Parliament through his own information campaign. Such an expectation management campaign needed to fully inform the civilian decision-makers, if not to ensure a comprehensive civil-military approach to the conflict then to shade the government with *any* information.

¹⁹⁹ Howe, “The Narrative of Lieut. Gen Sir William Howe in a Comittee of the House of Commons,” 9.

E. CONSOLIDATE: FORCE MISMANAGEMENT

Gage's third strategy—consolidation—began in 1774. The idea was that by consolidating resources in a central location the British military could better plan, prepare, and conduct operations against the rebel army. Here was an attempt by Gage to grow and sustain his own limited force, but still be able to prosecute the war.

The primary condition necessary for planning and preparing for an operation was information, and still is. The same condition would also diminish as forces are removed from the population. With the choice to fortify Boston, Gage defaulted control of society to the existing colonial institutions. These institutions were heavily influenced by the counter-state and already proven untrustworthy. Naturally, information would decrease as the rebels choked out the Crown's population support in uncontested areas. Even more, by reducing his signature, Gage provided the rebels with an easily identifiable target. The rebels could easily monitor and track British forces using only limited resources to do so.

Gage's mismanagement of his forces disposition excluded his ability to plan. With relatively no access outside Boston, Gage's informers were forced to develop means to get information through the siege lines. As the information passing continued, the ever-adept rebels increased their capacity to intercept the messages, which precluded any effective planning from within Boston. It is easier to forgive Gage for his force mismanagement provided the force protection response and his vast intelligence network, but not easy provided his goal to plan and prepare. This must have weighed heavily on Gage's shoulders as he went from a level of moderate information to no information.

Yet, this approach may have worked had Gage employed the following prescription. His decision to consolidate was not incorrect, but the extent to which he did so was his downfall. The recommendation put forth here is that consolidation needed to occur at a lower echelon such as the Brigade or Battalion level—an action that certainly occurred in their day. Elements of these sizes garrisoned in forts at strategic locations with sea access would have presented wider coverage and more information nodes within the predominately sea-based colonies. By using his naval assets to their fullest potential

he could protect his organization. More importantly, such actions would provide him increased flexibility and maneuver space while also allowing the inflamed Massachusetts population to calm down.

F. AVERSION: RISK MISMANAGEMENT

Howe's first strategy sought to strike one critical blow to the Continental Army. In summary, this approach set out to deal the Americans a single, devastating defeat on the battlefield forcing them to capitulate to the Crown and give up all ideas of independence.

All the conditions necessary for successful implementation of this strategy were present. Howe possessed the necessary amount of intelligence on the enemy's composition, disposition, strength, and capabilities. The Loyalist networks that endured Washington's occupation provided such information to him. Furthermore, he understood how the population would react due in large part to the large swaths of Loyalists that resided in New York and New Jersey. This was an assumption, but one that proved correct. Lastly, Howe possessed the mechanism by which he could achieve his desired end state. This mechanism was his army. Unlike Gage, Howe actually possessed all the required conditions for successfully executing his first plan. However, with that being said he still failed to destroy Washington's army.

The reason why this strategy failed was because of a single, major fault that was possessed by Howe. This fault was his aversion to risk. Any military commander, to include Howe, is provided a certain amount of latitude for inaction when he or she believes that their force is in a precarious situation. Yet, what is not excusable is allowing over-caution to pervade one's every decision, which is exactly what happened to Howe. Repeatedly, he failed to make a command decision when it mattered the most. Also worth mentioning is how his role as peace negotiator affected his decision-making abilities. Our sentiments are that the responsibilities associated with this role factored into Howe's thinking, but it does not fully explain why he was unable to overcome his aversion and exude the required killer instinct. This fault is easier forgiven provided an assumption that the rebels desired peace, thus needless violence would not help the

situation. However, Howe's presence at Bunker Hill would have surely cleared his mind of these thoughts, and therefore this fault, though the least disastrous of all, cannot be forgiven.

To achieve victory over the Americans via this strategy, Howe needed to manage risk better. He needed to overcome his inability to assume risk in battle. This strategy was painstakingly planned and the commander knew of the risks prior to embarking upon the strategy. Yet, lacking the steadfastness to see it through execution on Long Island and Manhattan ironically exacerbated the future risk to his forces.

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